

No. 3 MARCH 1990

\$4

# Piledriver

# 'SAVAGE'

See Cover Story

**INSIDE:**

**THE TOP PRO WRITERS...**

- LEAPIN' LARRY L
- DENNIS TWILIGHT
- PRECIOUS PETER S
- DR. D

**PLUS**

The man who saved Antonio Inoki



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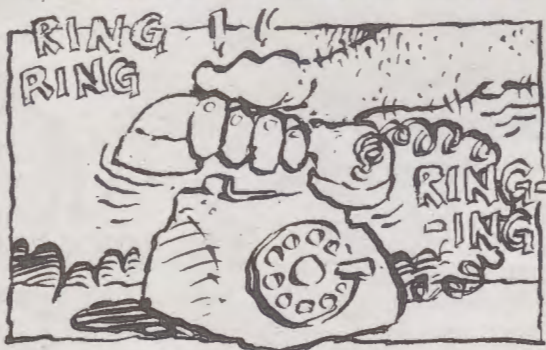
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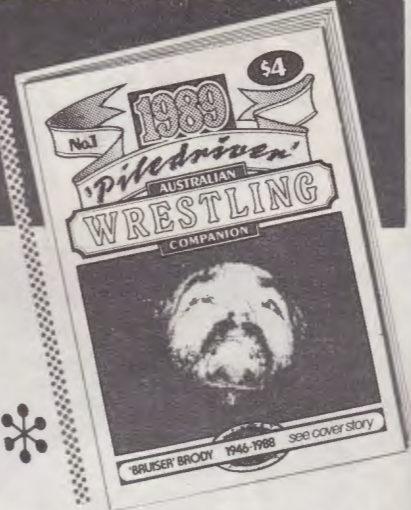


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# THE LEAN MEAN FIGHTING MAGAZINE

## EDITORIAL

### Put the choke..one..two..

The response to issue 2 was pretty overwhelming (we sold out) and we've also put the price back up to \$4.00 just to get rid of those pesky 5c. pieces.

The New Year sees professional wrestling entering a new decade and a new era. What Vince McMahon started in 1983 by invading non-WWF territory and which allowed Jim Crockett to take over Bill Watts' WWF and the Florida market with no repercussions is now having the expected effect.

The Memphis based CWA has folded leaving Jerry Lawler as the combined USWA title holder with no home turf to call his own and the once vibrant Memphis circuit now a mere satellite of the Dallas based USWA (formerly World Class). Calgary's Stampede promotion is also in a hiatus although there's some hope of its revival when the British Bulldogs and Owen Hart return from Japan.

The only bright spot on the independent scene in America is that former NWA "manager" Paul E. Dangerously is trying to combine 5 small promotions into one loose semi-large promotion. If this succeeds, and if Eddie Gilbert becomes booker, expect some entertaining angles, at the very least, from that area.

This issue we're introducing a reader's poll to see which wrestlers you like (as opposed to who we foist on you) and that will allow us to have ratings starting next issue. The letters have been great, by the way, so keep them coming because we value each and every one of them.

To round off, for those of you interested in that sort of thing, you can hear wrestling news and related material from the following sources:-

- **Danger Low Brow** - 3RRR-FM (102.7 Mh) on Saturday mornings 10.30 to 12.00 midday.
- **Fast Fictions** - 3RRR-FM on Monday nights 8.00 p.m. - 10.00 p.m.
- **Laz's Wrestling Fact** - 3RRR-FM on the TV Eye segment of the Breakfasters each Wednesday at 8.45 a.m.
- **Wrestling Information Service** (telephone 0055-12308)
- **Ringsport Report** (telephone 580 0409).

And finally, this editorial wouldn't be complete without a big thanks to Matt Holdsworth, our Art Director, who's put so much time and effort into making the last few issues as good as they have been. (I knew all that time in Reform School would do him good).  
And I want a clean break now.

*Dr. D*

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- \* Riki Choshu
- \* Part 2 of Dennis Twilight's How to be a Wrestler



Hawk

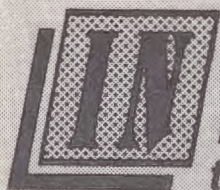
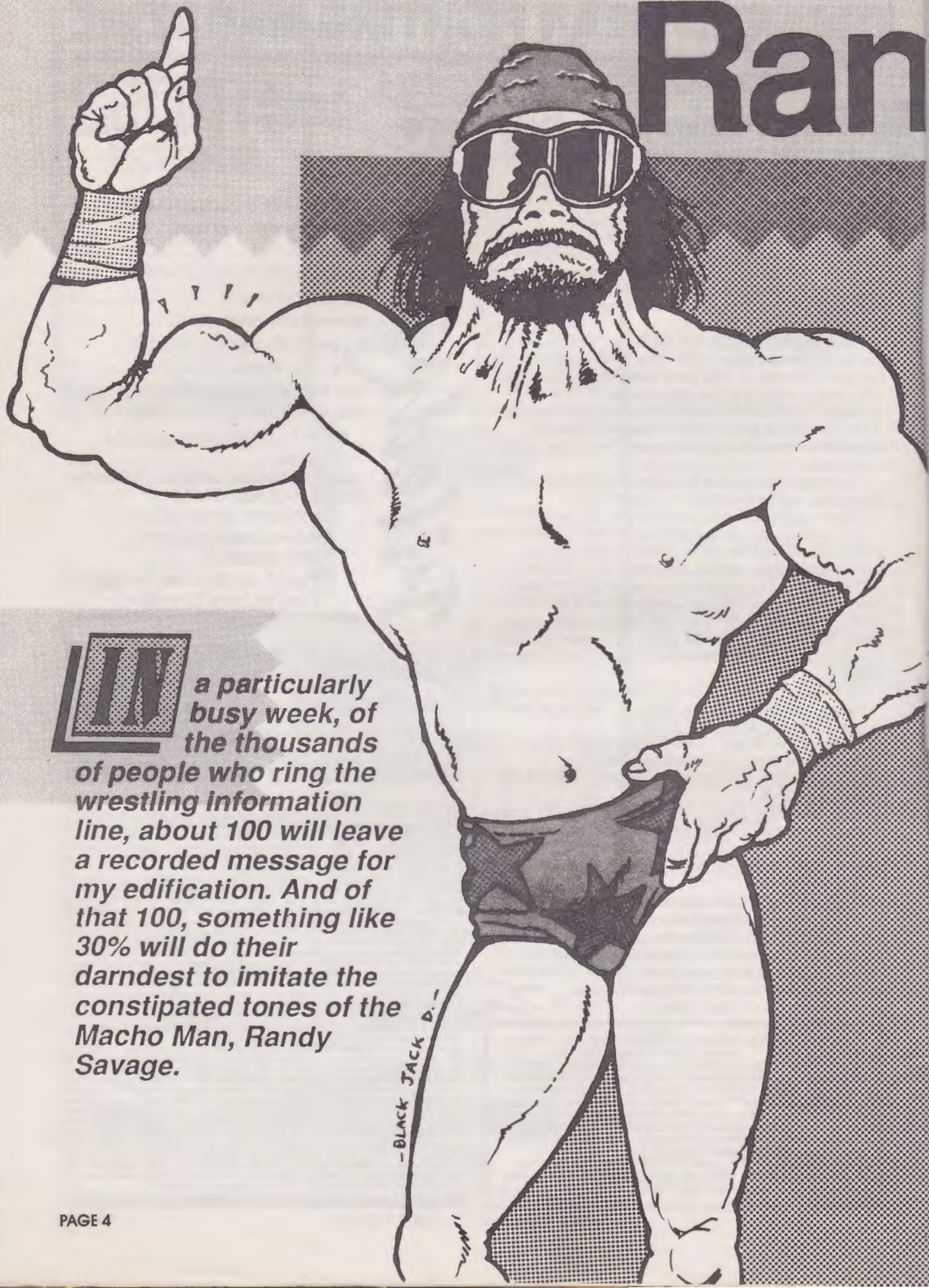


Animal

What is a gimmick? Leapin' Larry L in the brilliant Glossary he wrote for us (see PILEDRIIVER No. 1) described it as, "the wrestler's on-screen persona, the paraphernalia relating to it. Eg: Hulk Hogan's invulnerability and "righteousness", Jake Roberts' snake-like movements, literate maverick interviews and pet snake, Piper's mouth and cheapshot moves, DiBiase's moneyed arrogance, and so on". The dictionary defines gimmick as, "noun. a pronounced eccentricity of dress, manner, voice, etc., or an eccentric action or device, esp. one exploited to gain publicity. (L.L. was right on!) I can accept the fact that to add an extra dimension to their personality all respectable pro wrestlers need a gimmick. What I find deplorable is the depths some (not all, but a few) wrestlers will stoop to to have a gimmick. You've probably thought of one or two yourself already who seem to thrive on bad taste! I accept the fact that you can't be an introvert if you're a professional wrestler. But I'm astounded by the sights and exploits of some of today's "modern" wrestlers. The Ultimate Warrior is an obscenity! He isn't muscle. He isn't fit. He isn't even a wrestler. He's perspiring heavily after 30 seconds in the ring. He's just an inflated balloon, pumped full of steroids. If someone was to stick him with a pin he'd pop! What kind of an example of a wrestling hero is he to put before today's younger generation? Not only is he setting a poor example for the fans, he's also doing irreversible and inevitably fatal damage to himself. No doubt it was in the late 1930's when pro wrestling first took on the exhibitionistic theatrics inside of the ring we are familiar with today. The promoters decided their performers ought to expand their act to include exploits outside of the ring as well. Realising there was a dollar or two to be made even when the wrestlers weren't engaged in grappling, they quickly created exotic personalities befitting the sort of person who stomps canvas for a living. And after a match the show would go on. Arguments, tussles, and incriminations. Today the top pro wrestlers' private lives (albeit fictitious nonsense) and pre-match interviews are as much a part of the show as the eventual and sometimes anti-climatic matches. All because wrestlers have got to have a gimmick. One final example, Hawk and Animal, known collectively as The Road Warriors (above). Putting aside their freaky facial make-up, their eccentric (and barely understandable) interviews, and their enormous size, these two clowns have the most ridiculous haircuts I've ever seen! It's like two pieces of a jigsaw. If you removed the hair from the head of one of them it would fit exactly into the place where the other Warrior has had his hair shaved off. It's like they've shared a tatty ten buck wig by haphazardly cutting it in two and wearing half each. What do they do in public to hide their embarrassment? Wear garbage bags on their heads? Wrestling has had many wild and way-out gimmicks pulled to sustain the fans' interest, but no doubt many fans have been driven away by the sheer stupidity of a wrestler who hasn't known when too much of a repulsive gimmick is enough. Where is George the Animal now?



# Ran



**a particularly busy week, of the thousands of people who ring the wrestling information line, about 100 will leave a recorded message for my edification. And of that 100, something like 30% will do their darndest to imitate the constipated tones of the Macho Man, Randy Savage.**

-BLACK JACK D.-



# dy Savage

## King of the hill... or over it?

Week in, week out they still do it. (And sometimes, just sometimes, I ache for someone to imitate some other wrestler, say the wheeze, Ultimate Warrior. Can you imagine if it was the Warrior? I'd probably think the caller was either an asthmatic or a pervert).

Anyway, so much for the digression. What is it about Randy Savage that makes him so popular with the fans, even after his effective burial at Wrestlemania 5 by an egocentric Hulk Hogan?

Let's unfold the pages of time (cliche No.453) to see if history gives us some clues.

On 15 November 1952 in Columbus, Ohio, semi-legendary wrestler Angelo Poffo's wife gave

birth to their first son, Randy Poffo. Randy would soon realize that he was destined to enter the ranks of the likes of Greg Valentine, Ted di Biase and Iron Mike Sharpe - the second generation wrestlers who imitated their dads to tread the canvas of the squared circle.

At school Randy excelled in baseball and athletics and in 1971 played baseball in the minor leagues for the St. Louis Cardinals. Shortly

brother Larry Poffo to capture the Southeastern tag team belts. The Poffos were effective heels (if you can imagine Larry as a bleached bad guy) but only held the belts for a few months before leaving the area.

Angelo Poffo, meanwhile, was running his own promotion out of Tennessee, the I.C.W. (International Championship Wrestling), and had installed Larry as the I.C.W. "world" champion in 1978. Larry's drawing

## COVER STORY

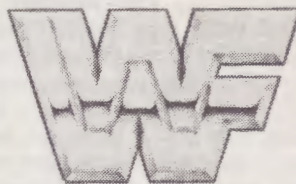
thereafter he also played for a team based in Sarasota, Florida and if that name sounds familiar, it should. Savage (or Poffo) would later name Sarasota as his home town for his ring entrances.

In late 1973 Poffo, weighing a mere 155 pounds, donned a mask to wrestle as The Spider in the Florida and Georgia wrestling promotions. Like many second generation wrestlers he was hesitant in using his father's name and tried to make it strictly on his own ability. At the time Georgia wrestling was under the effective control of Ole Anderson (he of the Four Horsemen fame). Anderson re-christened Poffo and in 1976 the Randy Savage character was born.

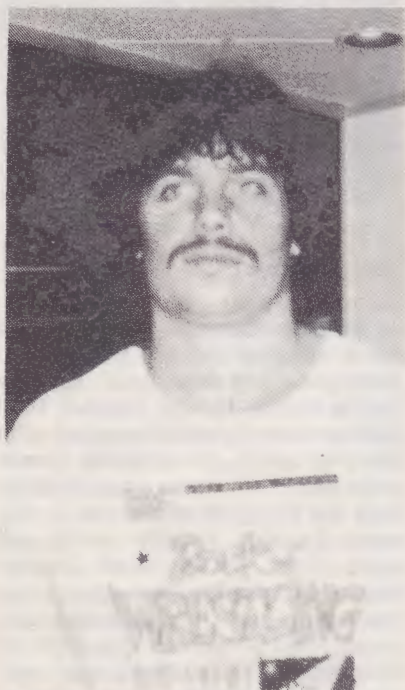
Savage's new name proved to be very appropriate as he developed a reputation for standing up to promoters to enforce his rights and was blacklisted from several regional promotions as a result. Savage left Georgia to wrestle in the Southeast Area where he teamed with his half

power then was about what it is now - zilch.

Randy was finding it difficult to obtain work in most of the Southern promotions and so he was virtually forced to work in his dad's promotion for peanuts. ON 13 March 1979 Randy fought and defeated Larry to win the ICW title. Two things happened during Randy's tenure as world champ over the next four years. Most importantly, the Randy Savage character we know and love/loathe today was honed to near perfection -



the voice, the long hair the gaudy costume and the flying elbow smash. Secondly, Savage met and married Liz Hewlitt, one of the ring announcers for the ICW TV show and Liz today occupies a special place in



The Genius, Lanny Poffo, in less intelligent days.



our hearts and gonads as Miss Elizabeth.

In 1983, Savage had his first bit of luck when the Jarrett Promotion operating out of Memphis, Tennessee brought him over to feud with the acknowledged king of Memphis wrestling, Jerry Lawler, for the Mid-Southern title. Savage was also given the mickey mouse "management" of Jimmy Hart who

was an added temptation for Savage, as if any more were needed.

Part of the package McMahon offered involved Mrs. Savage and nobody could have ever imagined at that time in July 1985 that 4 years later the Miss Elizabeth creation would have almost as much drawing power as the Macho Man.

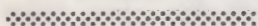
On Savage's entry into the WWF he was involved in an angle where all

Steele in every match and there was really no reason why a wrestler at the top of his form such as Savage should have to be involved with a clown act like Steele. At Wrestlemania 2 (7 April 1986), an event that nearly bankrupted Vince McMahon, Savage defeated Steele using his feet on the turnbuckle for leverage. Life really was seeming unfair at this point.



was at his peak at this time, giving amazing interviews which were so creative that the WWF talent scouts didn't waste too much time in latching onto him.

Between 1983 and 3 June 1985, Savage and Lawler traded the Mid-Southern title on several occasions and film footage of their matches shows Savage performing his flying elbow smash from the tops of cages and other similar daredevil stunts which helped rank him as one of the best wrestlers in America.

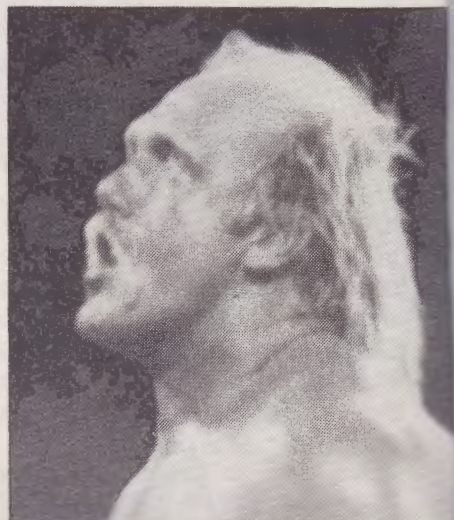


At one stage Savage had a real life feud going on with ex-Melbournite Bill Dundee, who had a very successful run in Memphis. In one incident involving the two, Dundee pulled a gun on Savage who wrestled it off him and used it to break Dundee's jaw. Dundee was small for a wrestler, but a real powerhouse who wouldn't forget such an ignominy. When Dundee was slated to return to the Memphis wrestling scene after nearly a year away, Savage conveniently decided to pack his bags and move New York way where there's a broken wrestler for every light on Broadway. Besides, Vince McMahon realizing the enormous potential that existed in Savage, had offered him in the vicinity of \$6,000 a week and this

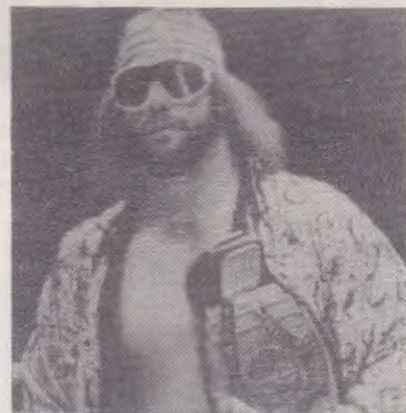
the WWF managers were portrayed as bidding for his services. Can you understand why Elizabeth was chosen when the rest of the field consisted of Mr. Fuji, Fred Blassie, Bobby Heenan, Jimmy Hart and Luscious Johnny Valiant? As you all know Savage chose the previously "unknown" Elizabeth and it was the classic case of the Beauty and the Beast all over again. Savage would abuse and chastise Elizabeth on TV and she would remain the ever demure "manager" who tended his affairs so that he could wrestle unhindered by business details. (And in case any of you out there buy this stuff, let me tell you that the only legitimate manager in professional wrestling is Paul Ellering, manager of the Road Warriors).

On February 1986 Savage defeated Tito (Chico) Santana for the WWF Intercontinental Belt at the Boston Garden using, of course, a foreign object. Incidentally Savage had to rummage around in his trunks for several minutes before he found the object - makes you wonder doesn't it?

And then, in one of those idiotic booking decisions that are so prevalent in wrestling, Savage was forced into a feud with George "the Animal" Steele who had supposedly developed a crush on Elizabeth. Savage had to carry the geriatric



*By 1987 Savage's popularity was second only to Hulk Hogan in the U.S.*



*Randy 'Macho Man' Savage was born 15.11.52. Made his professional debut in 1975 aged twenty-three.*

Salvation came in the form of a feud with the WWF's second top babyface Ricky Steamboat. At a TV taping on the 16th of October 1986 Savage demolished Steamboat with the ring bell in one of those vicious walkovers that make you instantly hate the villainous perpetrator, in this case Savage. Viewers would not soon forget the sight of Savage leaping from the top turnbuckle to ram the ring bell into Steamboat's unprotected throat nor the sight of Steamboat being stretchered out. Yep, brilliant booking on the part of McMahon/Pat Patterson who had just



taken over the job from George Scott. Steamboat spent a few months off the road "recuperating" from his injury before his return.

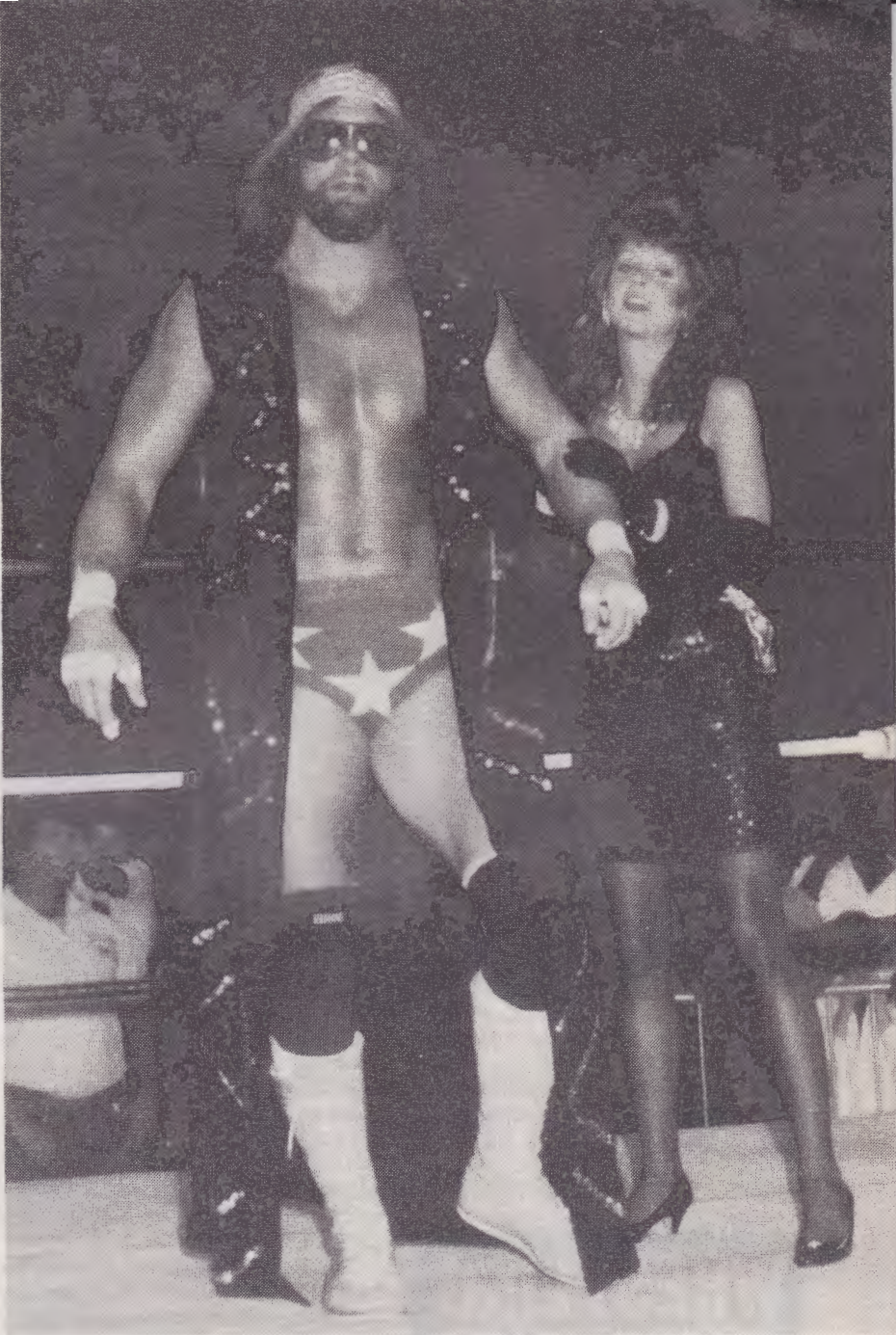
93,000 fans packed the Pontiac Silverdome on the 29th of March 1987 for Wrestlemania 3 to witness the resulting match between Savage and Steamboat which was on the undercard to the Hogan/Andre dozer and which turned out to be arguably the greatest WWF match of all time (see Piledriver 1 for full details). Savage, predictably, lost the Intercontinental belt that night.

From then on Savage could only go one way. When you're the ultimate heel, if you're turned right, you become the ultimate babyface. And who better to let the fans know that it's okay to like Savage now? Why none other than America's sweetheart of the ringside, Hulk Hogan.



After the Honky Tonk Man (Wayne Ferris) had shocked the wrestling world by defeating Ricky Steamboat so that the Steamer could take a 6 month sabbatical, Honky launched into a feud with Savage as to who was the greatest Intercontinental champ of all time. Predictably it culminated in a Saturday Night's Main Event when Hogan, at Elizabeth's insistence, saved Savage's hide from a beating at the hands of the Honky Tonk Man and the Hart Foundation. Yesiree Bob, Savage took a licking but kept right on ticking, becoming nearly as popular a face as Hogan in the process. Machomania was eclipsing Hulkamania and with good reason. Hulk Hogan was going to star in a movie of his own, produced by Titan Sports, and a ring in champion was required to fill Hogan's spot while he was off the road.

The grand plan went like this. On the NBC Prime Time Special set for the 5th of February 1988, Hogan was going to lose the WWF strap in the biggest screw job of all time. A twin referee - an evil twin referee - paid by Ted di Biase, the Million Dollar Man, was going to allow Andre the Giant finally to defeat Hogan in a pinfall victory. Andre would sell the belt to di Biase but the sale would be ruled invalid by the WWF figurehead president Jack Tunney. A tournament for the belt would then be scheduled for Wrestlemania 1V and the Macho Man would defeat all comers to rightfully earn his place as WWF world champion. Hogan would, again, give his seal of approval and



*Liz Hewlitt hit the big time in 1985 as Elizabeth, Savage's Valet. They'd been married since '79. A great deal of the Macho Man's success can be attributed to his wife.*

everyone would go away happier and richer.

Well, it more or less went like that. The NBC Prime Time Special, in competition with Beauty and the Beast, became the most widely watched wrestling match in history. Wrestlemania 1V beamed live from Atlantic City's Trump Plaza on 27th March 1988 was an aesthetic disaster and more people ended up watching the NWA's first Clash of Champions special which was free on TBS and which featured the marathon Flair/Sting encounter. Compared to the rabid NWA fans, Trump Plaza

was like a morgue and without the focus of the Hulk Hogan main event there was little interest or heat for even the final confrontation between the Million Dollar Man and the Macho Man. And boy, after watching Savage wrestle 4 times that night, were we sick of hearing Elgar's Pomp and Circumstance (Savage's theme music) by the end of the evening?

Still, Savage and wife carried the evening well and Savage was installed as the new WWF world champion. To his credit Savage, and to a lesser extent di Biase, did what many thought would have been



impossible for a Hulk - less WWF - make lots of money. Thousands turned up at the arenas to see excellent matches between Savage and di Biase. The two matches from Madison Square Garden stand out as the best WWF matches of 1988 with both wrestlers having their working boots on.

It was inevitable, with Hulk Hogan's return to the ring wars in

Elizabeth whipped off her dress during the Savage/Hogan v di Biase/Andre main event to reveal her bikini bottoms thus distracting the mega bucks allowing the mega powers to win the match. (McMahon made a financial killing on this card, by the way).

Over the next 6 months we saw the slow, agonizing Savage turn, back to heel. There were quite

decision, Hogan (who books his own finishes) wiped the mat with Savage. Savage's flying elbow had no effect on Hogan and Hogan's superman comeback and legdrop were all that was needed to effectively kill Savage as any future competition. If Savage had somehow remained world champion, the WWF could have sent split "A" cards around the U.S. featuring Savage on one and Hogan on the other and raked in millions. In forcing Hogan/Savage rematches onto a fandom which know that Savage could never win the WWF was limiting the potential of the feud. Which is exactly what happened and which accounts a great deal for the WWF's reduced house show attendances in late 1989.



Summer Slam '88, that Savage would not be allowed to stay world champion for very long. At Summer Slam '88 Savage also allowed his wife to be blatantly used as a sex object for the first time - a dismal portent of things to come - when

obvious hints at Survivors 11, and the Saturday Night's Main Event preceding the 1989 NBC Prime Time Special. Savage was jealous over Elizabeth's attention to Hulk Hogan and how did we know it was all going to come to a head on prime time TV before an audience of millions? Just call it intuition.

The Mega Powers were facing the Twin Towers, Akeem and the Big Bessman. Savage was taking a shellacking and got thrown out of the ring to land right on top of Elizabeth knocking her out. (Elizabeth took the best bump of the match and she didn't even step into the ring). Hogan, who was beside himself with grief, screwed lines left, right and centre and did an acting job that would have had him thrown off the set of General Hospital. Luckily Savage made the save with a great performance of jealousy and hate and when he spat out his lines at Lust Hogan there was genuine venom in them.

Obviously there was only one way to go. There was gonna be a showdown at Trump Plaza (again?) for Wrestlemania V. Who would get the belt and the girl?

In what was a disastrous booking

More stupidly, however, Vince McMahon split up the working relationship between Savage and Elizabeth. Even though half the world know that they were happily married the other half was expected to believe that Savage would fire Elizabeth and take on Sensational Sherri Martel as his manager. We got to see Savage verbally and physically abuse Elizabeth on TV which was a cheap and ugly way of getting heat and we were told by the people at Titan that the Randy Savage and Elizabeth wrestling characters were not to be confused with the real life Mr and Mrs Poffo. Wha.....?

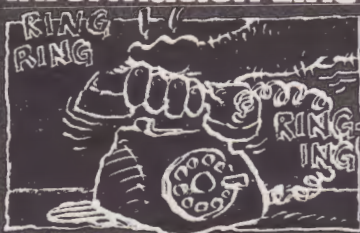
And anyway, what woman in her right mind would choose the Hulkster over the Macho Man if she'd had her druthers?

So here we are in early 1990 where Savage is King of the Ring and fighting battles no-one wants to see with Hacksaw Jim Duggan. If MASH was meatball surgery this is meatball wrestling - get 'em in, get 'em out, quick. Savage is too good for this sort of thing and if Hogan retires any time this year I can see Savage turning again and reuniting with Elizabeth. With the exception of the Ultimate Warrior (who is all charisma and no ability) there is absolutely no-one currently left in the WWF who could carry the WWF belt.

McMahon knows this and the fans know it. So next time I get my cassette tape jammed full of Macho Man imitators with indecipherable messages I'll know that you know it too.

(Oh yeah, and for that girl who does the Sensational Sherri voice, could you leave a phone number after the bell?)

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‘Is that a foreign object in your trunks, or is Elvira reclining again?’ **OR**  
 ‘When the cross-body block hits your eye—that’s AMORE!’ **OR**  
 ‘I’ve always wanted to wear underwear with my name on the back in public.’

By "Nature Kid" Dennis Twilight.



This article is about the Spray'n Wipe power chord sport of Pro-Wrestling. Specifically most fans desire to actually get INTO the squared circle and grapple with the villain or babyface of their choice. For example, would you let a passing stranger lift you 6 feet in the air and then suplex you onto the canvas during your lunch break? Or would you happily continue to whistle "Dixie" as Akeem splashed you? Finally, wouldn't you think about Roger Climpson and an AMP Superannuation policy if Vince McMahon Junior informed you that it was your job to have an interesting match with Dino Bravo or die?

Well little PILEDRIVER peons, given that I've never stepped into a wrestling ring, the following thoughts are subject to an error rate of approximately plus or minus 150%, but I have researched this subject matter thoroughly through countless hours of studying video footage and body-slaming my younger sister. So with that important disclaimer in our referee-holds, let's answer the question, "What would you have to do to become a pro-wrestler?"

## A. SIZE, GUTS AND JUICE

First and foremost you would need size on your side. Ignoring the Japanese promotions where the wrestlers are universally lighter, the American wrestling promotions insist on a minimum weight of say 230-240 pounds (about 16 1/2-17 stone or 100-110 kilograms) and even then you wouldn't be considered a main eventer in a promotion such as the WWF where the main eventers are more in the 280-300 pound mark, (about 20-20 1/2

stone or 130-135 kilograms).

With the exception of guys like the Big Bossman and Akeem, who are naturally freaks of nature, the human body needs to be pushed and pushed hard to stay at about the 17 stone mark. Most pro-wrestlers (and I want to make a special exception here of Dusty Rhodes, the American Fat-Cell), spend hours in the gym and would easily spend the bulk of their day eating. You don't stay that big unless you have something like 6 square meals a day, every day, 7 days a week.

Still on the question of size, the pimple on buttock topic of steroids must raise its Ultimate Warrior head. Steroids, will, if you train hard and continue eating the equivalent of a small bar mitzvah reception every day, make you bigger. Also, as Dave Meltzer pointed out in a recent Wrestling Observer Newsletter, steroids assist in helping the body repair itself upon obtaining an injury. Therefore as pro-wrestlers do get injured around the clock, taking "the juice" will benefit in getting them back into the ring sooner and helps keep drug pushers in expensive European cars.



## B. GETTING A PH.D.

So assuming you've trained yourself up to a decent weight category, you'll also have to have graduated from a wrestling school. There are several "pro-wrestling schools around the U.S. and more importantly amateur wrestling (i.e. Olympics-style wrestling) is a legitimate sport in the Land of Beaver Cleaver. Many pro-wrestlers have, to quote NWA announcer Jim Ross, "...outstanding amateur backgrounds," including Steve Williams, Rick Steamboat and Barry Windham, to name but a few.

I get the impression (and I stress I am speculating here to a wild extent) that "graduating" from pro-wrestling school doesn't take real long, as your future is dependent more on what happens after you've learnt the elementary holds. That brings us to our next aeroplane spin category.

## C. TAKING A BUMP

For my mat-wars addiction, this is probably the most important you-are-a-wrestler category. First let's get all English Expression teacher here and define our terms. "Taking a bump" means taking a fall/tumble/crash that basically causes any sane observer to yell "ouch". Classic bumps that fly to mind include:

- Ric Flair's standing on the top rope and being caught by other wrestler who then slams Flair onto his back from the top rope, (this bump always causes me to wonder if pro-wrestling is not in fact controlled by a small group of crazed chiropractors),
- Any super-plex off the top rope for the same reason,
- Ted Dibiase's Academy Award winning back flying cheek-bone-head-stand,
- Jimmy Snuka's positively insane "Superfly" leap off the top of the cage straight onto the canvas in his 1982 Madison Square Garden cage-match with Bob Backlund.

Let's take a simple bump and analyze it here. How about the common, garden variety body-slam. What does it feel like being dropped on your back from say 3-6 feet in the air onto the canvas. As with any good "sportsman's night story", there are conflicting theories on exactly what it's like landing on the canvas.

The most popular view goes on the concept that given that there is sprung steel under that fairly thin white padding, being body-slammed is like being slammed onto a car bonnet with a blanket on it. Isn't that an appealing thought that makes you want to just yell "me next" on a Saturday Night's Main Event?

The other view says it's like taking falls on those old High School thin green mats that were the pinnacle of any P.E. class during my secondary school years. This would explain some of the bone-crushing moves that wrestlers get up to in the ring. Although I still wouldn't take a super-plex bump unless there were like 3 feet of Tontine pillows piled onto the canvas.

Incidentally next time you see a wrestler take a decent bump on his back, watch how red the back is when he gets up - the point here is that no matter what theory is correct, there is quite a degree of pain in the simplest of bumps. Remember it would be your job to grin and bear an ordinary bump of this type. Still want to be a wrestler?

Well if in doubt, in the next issue of PILEDRIVER, I'll continue this journey into pro-wrestling by covering more stuff on bumps - we'll get into the nether world of your opponent "protecting" you on the bump, then we'll bassanova over to interviews and image and anything else I scratch out. Until then as Tito Santana is prone to point out **ARRIBA!** and good head-locking.

# Meetings With Here Come

By Precious Peter S.

One of the unexpected pleasures of going to the arenas to witness live the surreal carnage that flashed across my T.V. screen each Saturday and Sunday, was the exciting and often bizarre experience of waiting outside the arena for the grapplers to arrive for the card.

As a 13yr old and a fanatical devotee of Pro Wrestling, I was, as Vince McMahon once described, a victim of the DDT, "besieged by apoplexy" at the prospect of finally seeing my larger than life heroes in the flesh. Ironically the first wrestler I ever saw whilst waiting at the dressing room door out front of Festival Hall here in Melbourne was a midget by the name of Wee Willie Wilson.

It was obvious to me even then that I was going to encounter many strange individuals from mysterious places with even more mysterious origins. There were always the 'goofballs' at school who mocked me from behind their petrol stained personas about my 'wrestlemania', but I felt that I was privy to some secret world that they could never experience or understand. Where else in Melbourne could you encounter Sheiks, midgets, masked psychos, Nazis, giant Texans and a madman from the Sudan, all in one evening?

It was so strange being there each Saturday afternoon with all the regulars who had the same passion, curiosity or just plain craziness to arrive at the arena 4 hours before the card was due to commence. There was this little Maltese guy who used to give jobber Alan Pinfold hell. It was hilarious to witness Pinfold's weekly reaction to his predicament. As the cab pulled up the guy would start yelling and Pinfold would wind down his window and start fuming. He would pay the cabbie amidst the taunts and neanderthal abuse then stop dead in his tracks with a side splitting look of total indignation and unleash a torrent of venal abuse before disappearing into the arena.

'Pretty Boy' Johnny Boyd, who later became Warlord Johnathan Boyd in the U.S. of A., was another jobber who would always respond to any abuse hurled his way from the 'face' loving crowd. I was getting his autograph once when a presumptuous fellow started baiting him. 'Pretty Boy' swung around and abused the 'beejesus' out of him much to my

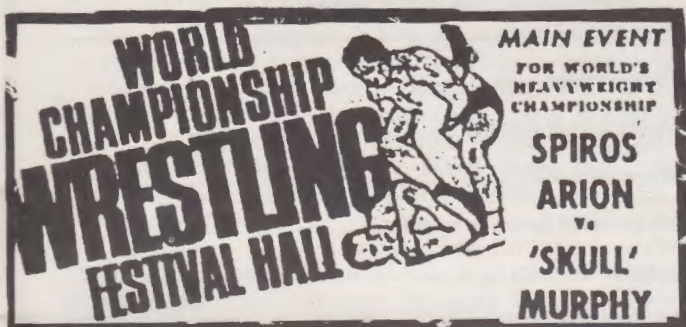


# With Remarkable Men comes the Devil

delight. I guess because he and Alan Pinfold didn't get any interview time on T.V., the street became their forum.

It was an education to the ways of the world being exposed to the many wild characters descending upon that stretch of asphalt. 'Killer' Buddy Austin, a mean, world weary veteran of the mat wars, was the first person I ever heard use the term 'mother f---er'. This was before the emergence of 'Blaxploitation' films introduced this peculiarly

American expression to Australian audiences. Austin turned to a particularly abrasive member of the growing throng and, pointing an accusative finger in his face said "You know what you are? You're a mother f---er". For years after that incident a friend who was there with me that day always greeted me with "You know what you are?"



1966. Remember?

As the afternoon passed into evening the cabs began to appear more frequently. We would wait with great anticipation at the prospect of a cab arriving carrying 'someone special.'

On one occasion I was standing right at the doorway, the prime position, as a cab pulled up and 'Playboy' Gary Hart, my fave manager of the era, got out. He slowly walked along the sidewalk and knocked at the door. Well I stood there looking up at Hart, who stood around 6'4", and he turned and fixed his hypnotic gaze upon me for about 10 seconds. This happened not long after the famous Mario Milano hypnotism angle so I was both terrified and excited. That night when I got home, I checked to see if I had sprouted a pencil moustache and sideburns.

In the faltering light one spring evening a cab pulled up and out stepped Big Bad John, Waldo Von Erich and Abdullah the Butcher, the madman from the Sudan. The look on the cabbie's face as Big Bad John paid the fare told me it was not one of his favourite journeys. Of all the wrestlers who made their way along the street to the doorway the most unnerving was Abdullah the Butcher. Nobody abused him. Everyone just stood in terror.

Abdullah was certainly a strange sight to behold on a hazy North Melbourne street. His tag team partner Waldo Von Erich always wore a tee-shirt, a la Tommy Hafey, and with a

permanent sneer etched onto his face he would reel off a few "Get out of here idiots" or "Go away, punk" to any who foolishly approached him for an autograph; like me. He was great though. Remember when he got so upset during a T.V. interview, that he smashed the ring steps to pieces? That impressed the heck out of me.

I was a big fan of 'Dirty' Dick Murdoch from Waxahachie, Texas and I eagerly awaited his appearance as part of the Texas Outlaws with his partner, the evil Dusty Rhodes. Do you remember them? I sure as hell do! As I was waiting in the centre of the side walk for their cab to arrive, I felt a presence behind me. I turned around and there, in jeans and t-shirts, were these two giant Texans about 6 feet from me. I was glued to the spot and they came straight towards me, this mass of Texas evil. As much as I wanted to move I couldn't and they brushed past me, Dick Murdoch on one side and Dusty Rhodes on the other. I was double teamed by the Texas Outlaws (well, sort of!) Damned if I can't forget how BIG!! they were.

King Curtis was the most animated of the grapplers in his street appearances, which will come as no surprise to anyone who saw and heard him on T.V. He would wade through the crowd that had gathered through the early evening yelling "Get out of the way" whilst waving his arms around wildly. I always got out of the way.

Of course some illusions were bound to be shattered amongst these strange happenings. Spiros Arion, idol of thousands and a tough sonofagun, used to arrive in a shoddy green Valiant driven by one of his mates. Even the fearsome Skull Murphy appeared almost human as he knocked at the door one afternoon with me only about one foot away at his side.

The door opened and the attendant, instead of recoiling in horror at the fearsome sight before him, greeted Skull like a long lost brother saying "Pat, how are you champ?" to which Skull quite humbly responded, "Very well thanks, friend", or words to that effect. He never seemed quite so scary to me after that moment.

There were a lot of weird sights and sounds from those golden days that will live with me forever. One of the strangest sights was seeing a cab pull up with a masked demon in the back seat. Can anybody remember a masked wrestler called 'The Devil'? He wore a blazing red mask and Jack Little once asked him on World Championship Wrestling, "Is it true that you wear that mask to cover up burns you received in a horrible atomic accident?" (as opposed to a pleasant atomic accident, I suppose)

In the distant twilight of those crazy times the one thing that I think exemplified the true surreal nature of it all was a guy running down the street outside Festival Hall as the cab with the masked grappler in it pulled up down the street yelling hysterically "Here comes the Devil!"



# PILEDRIIVER 1989 Australian Readers Wrestling Awards

PHOTOCOPY THIS PAGE AND COMPLETE ALL DETAILS  
CLOSING DATE FOR ALL ENTRIES: APRIL 30, 1990

1989 was a big year for wrestling. The WWF went from strength to strength and in Japan there was a revolution with the success of the style-setting UWF. Some stars rose whilst others faded somewhat, but for the fans there was never a dull moment. We know what we liked and disliked in 1989, but we want to know your thoughts. Who? Why? What? Where?

When? Which? How? Have? Haven't? How come? Etc. So we've decided to implement our own annual readers awards....

Vote for your favourites and see how your selections compare with other readers. Fill in your votes (remember to keep a copy), mail them to us and we'll publish the results next issue.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

I am... ☐ Male ☐ Female.....years old.

I have been a wrestling fan for....years.

PILEDRIIVER is... ☐ Wonderful, ☐ OK ☐ Awful!

The Best Wrestler 1989 .....

Brief comment.....

The Worst Wrestler 1989.....

Brief comment.....

Best Tag Team .....

Best Manager .....

Best Announcer.....

Favourite Special Event '89 .....

Best match..... Vs .....

Best feud..... Vs .....

Best angle.....

Best gimmick .....

Worst gimmick .....

Most overrated wrestler .....

Most improved .....

Most unimproved.....

Best wrestler on interviews .....

Greatest technician .....

Most exciting move .....

Worst hairstyle .....

My personal favourite wrestler.....

Brief comment .....

My personal most dislikeable wrestler .....

Brief comment .....

The all-time greatest wrestler (not just '89) .....

Brief comment .....

What makes a perfect wrestler?

Rate in your order of preference from 1 to 10 these wrestler attributes-

..... Gimmick .....

..... Physical build .....

..... Theatrical skill .....

..... Strength .....

..... Babyface/heel .....

Brief comment .....

CONDITIONS: One entry per person. Only male or female wrestlers currently working are eligible to be voted for, although they may be from any promotion and any country in the world.

NOTE: We've allowed room after several of the categories for you to

write a brief comment. This is entirely optional, your vote is not invalid if you comment on only some or none of your choices. But please, if you do write a comment keep it to a few words. Thank you. We look forward to receiving your entry.



BY THE MAN WHO KNOWS MORE ABOUT WRESTLING THAN ALL OF GORILLA MONSOON PUT TOGETHER

# Harbour City Havoc

WITH ED LOCK

As noted in the first edition of *Piledriver*, a viable wrestling scene still exists in the licenced clubs of Sydney. The 1990 season opened on Friday 19 January at the Marrickville Olympic Soccer Club, situated at 2 Beechag Street, Kyeemagh. The show was presented by International Wrestling Promotions, who hope to stage weekly cards at this venue for at least the first three months of the year.

In the opening bout David Hart drew with fellow Sydneysider Mike Starr. Both grapplers are only 18 years old and made their pro debuts in 1989. However, despite their inexperience, Hart and Starr are quite accomplished matmen and look to have big futures in the business. The match was a babyface encounter, with Dave subtly heeling it on occasions to appease the crowd. Midget wrestler Mr Big of New Zealand served as referee when his Aussie opponent B.J. Davis no-showed. The match was a decent opener but the inherent comedy of Big did not enhance a "serious" contest.

George Chami, of Sydney (via Lebanon), beat Dynamite Danny Burns of Liverpool, N.S.W. in the second match of the night. Chami is a veteran who once laid claim to the Australian Middleweight Title. His ring persona alternates between face and heel - often during the same match! Danny is a second generation grappler; the son of former World Championship Wrestling (W.C.W.) prelimmer Bobby Burns (a.k.a. Bill Rawlins). Burns, upon debuting several years ago, seemed a certain star of the future.

Unfortunately his development as a worker has not equalled his potential. Danny, a face elsewhere, is a heel at this club and may be better suited to this role. The crowd was solidly behind semi-face George to the extent that one detractor loudly referred to the young Liverpoolian as Vegemite Danny Burns! The match failed to reach great technical heights but drew late heat when Dan hardway-juiced from the nose. The Lion of Lebanon ended the contest with that out-of-vogue finisher the Sunset Flip. Referee for this bout was Pancho Omega, a retired W.C.W. undercard worker and club competitor.

The third match saw Ken Dazzler Dunlop and Wayne Lofty Pickford (from Melbourne and Sydney respectively) retain the Australasian Tag Team Title by defeating Dennis Lykouris and Lou the Machete Marcello (the former originally from Greece I believe, the latter "from Italy, now making his home in Sydney"). Dunlop is the best wrestler in Australia bar none, whilst Pickford is certainly the most underrated. The champions are a great heel combination and are legitimate proteges of the Fabulous Kangaroo, Roy Heffeman.

Former national light heavyweight champion Lykouris is a veteran of the club circuit, who gained experience in W.C.W. preliminaries. Dennis now appears to limit his bouts to this particular venue where his following is very strong. He can still work but is obviously at the end of a long career. Marcello is a solid albeit unspectacular babyface. Perhaps Lou's ring efficiency could benefit from an injection of flamboyance by way of a heel turn!

This was the best match of the night. The champions dominated the bout with their heated double teaming of Marcello, which allowed Lykouris the hot tags. Lou bled freely (courtesy of Dunlop) before falling to the heel's Demolition

Drop - the Dazzler executing the Elbow Drop and Lofty making the pin. Officiating was Omega.

George Zorbas (of Greece, now Sydney) won by disqualification over Kenny Cocky Medlin (Sydney), who retained the Australian Light Heavyweight Belt. Zorbas is a former holder of the LHWt strap and yet another ex-W.C.W. jobber. A babyface, he is all but retired and, like countryman Lykouris, only works this club (where he may hold a promotional interest).

George relies on the basics, his performances being commensurate with his overall ring inactivity. Zorbas, however, could still figure in the title picture in future. Current (and multi-time) champ Medlin is, pound for pound, one of the best wrestlers Australia has produced. Whilst many of his contemporaries jobbed for W.C.W., Ken's ability was recognised as early as the late 1960's when he received a push as national welterweight titlist.

Medlin is a first rate heel and still a fine worker although in the twilight of a great career. The Cocky One carried the action which culminated in a ref bump for the dq finish. The referee for this and the next match was Alan Pinfold, who W.C.W. viewers will definitely recall.

In the main event Greece's John Tolios (of Sydney) pinned the masked Mr Wrestling (from "Las Vegas, Nevada" - actually Melbourne). As the Australian Heavyweight Champion, Bruiser Davis, may soon vacate the title this bout was a possible eliminator for the strap. Tolios served his ring apprenticeship as a T.V. jobber and stadium prelim wrestler for W.C.W. John is a babyface who predominantly utilises power moves. He appears to be a legitimate strongman and remains physically imposing despite his tenure on the mat.

Beneath the villainous Mr Wrestling's hood is Steve Hardy. He first gained recognition as face Kid Hardy on W.C.W. in the 1970's. During this period an emphasis was placed (out of necessity) on promoting local matmen and the talented Victorian received a mid-level push. In the 1980's Steve became the patriotic Corporal Hardy (a Kirchner clone), complete with slouch hat, fatigues and Aussie flag. Hardy is a good worker as either face or heel and he excels in bumping. Tolios took the victory, much to the crowd's delight, with an Aeroplane Spin and body press.

The commentator was entertainer and former professional boxer, Trevor Singleton.

I would like to encourage all fans to attend the local cards whenever they can. Ticket prices generally range from free(!) to \$7.00 and the workers (who are not earning Titan-like bucks for their bumps) provide a good night's entertainment.

Late results to hand from the same venue on 27th of January:- Shane Ace Fenton drew with Rod the Stinger Borthwick; Lou Marcello defeated the Blade Runner; Australasian Tag Team Title: Dazzler Dunlop & Lofty Pickford defeated Dennis Lykouris & Mike Starr; Jack Claybourne defeated Danny Burns; Bruiser Davis & John Tolios defeated Mr Wrestling & the Samoan Warrior.

*Details on the above in the next issue of PILEDRIVER. Until then I wish you heated viewing  
Regards, Ed Lock.*



# IF I WERE

*(yabble diddle dubble...) from that*

Ted Turner - now is the time! Rumours of Hulk Hogan retiring after Wrestlemania VI is the opening the NWA must exploit. It needs the name value of a Hulk Hogan and with quality advertising, hype and clever booking, the Alliance can be THE promotion both in work (which it is) and profitability (which McMahon's Fed. is) and most importantly the public's choice as the major league. The TBS machine can provide the hype, money and negotiations whilst the booking should be such...

Entice Hogan via the one thing he won't refuse - moolah (not the grappler but cash). One to two million for half a year's work should sway Hulk over.

Hulk tells Vince and Linda McMahon that he'll leg drop Warrior (his likely Mania foe) and have a week off with his Mrs. and daughter Brooke. Only after that, will he and Linda (Hulk's old woman) sit down with Vince and his Linda to settle a new lucrative contract. Meanwhile Hulk signs on to Turner's payroll.

Mania VI and all its "glamour" comes around and the Hulkster does the come back, legdrop, pose, cups the ear and collects his belt. Vince doesn't know what only a few do. As always the NWA has booked a Clash of Champions on free t.v. to oppose VI. This time it's booked to conclude 2 hours or so after the WWF's event is over. It is also very close by. Some seats in the Clash may be papered but it's important that it be a capacity crowd. The card features the Steiners V Road Warriors and a pacey Sting match to open. The main event is the Lex Luger V Ric Flair title bout called a "Night to Remember". The NWA must indicate that the title must change hands. Luger is told that he must do the job clean for the good of the NWA; and to go back to the dressing room quick! He isn't told why - few are, but today there are no arguments just "work" as booked. Total commitment nothing less is expected.

Hogan with his wife and child arm in arm leave Mania, "off" for their "break" - they have a reservation so they won't hang around and who will argue when he holds his daughter with a cruise ticket for that night? He drives off...

At a designated point he stops and is whisked away to be flown (plane, chopper) to the Clash nearby. Flair in an amazing sequence defeats the package called Luger.



Luger quickly leaves backstage. Hogan is ready - the NWA is ready, will Vince be?! Who cares?!

As the theme of 2001 blasts and Flair cuddles his belt. "I Am A Real American" comes on and out runs Hogan. Shock! The place goes crazy, Flair goes "Who!" in a careful voice. Hogan jumps in, tears off his shirt, flexes and grabs the house mic.

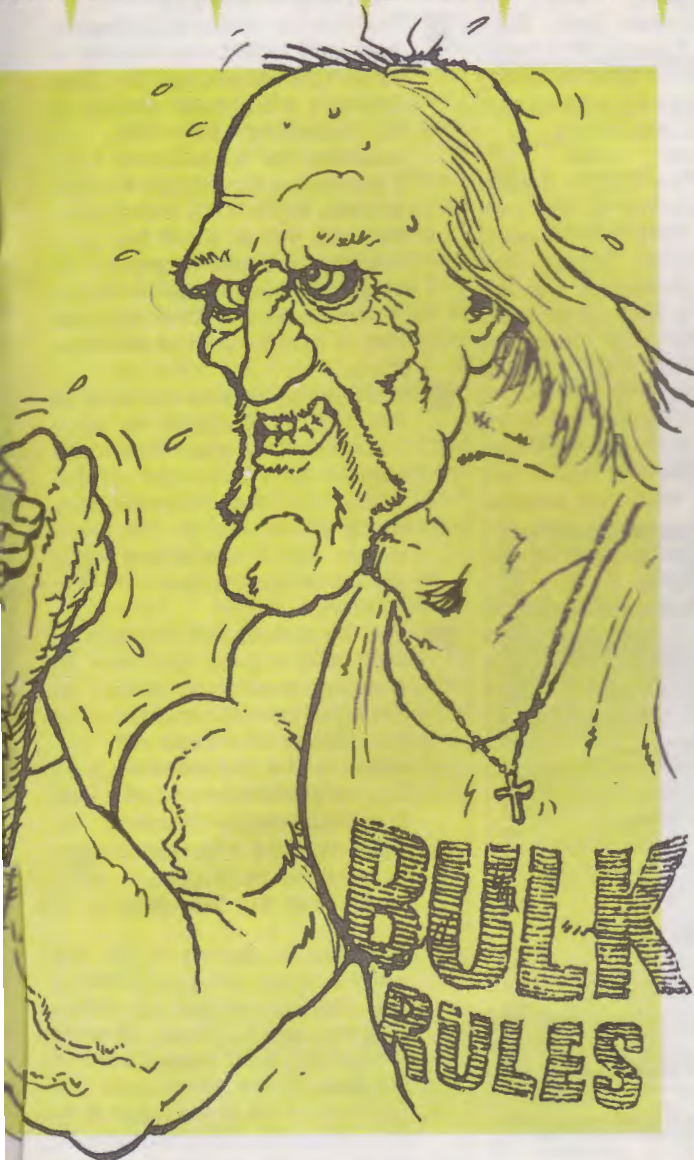
"Flair, all the little Hulkamancas have told me...I've done it all...now I want you.....I'm sick of all the fat bellies....it's your turn Ricky boy..."

"Who! You are a two-bit champion! To be the man you've got to beat the man, and I'm the man, Who!"



# A BOOKER

## amous musical 'Booker on the Roof'



A small brawl and shoving ensues, stare downs, Hogan flexing and Flair (wearing his robes) screams on the mic, "You'll get your match, you'll be a Hulk-a-moron when I'm finished with you, you'll be a beach bum and go back to being a second rate actor, bassist or plain bum because you're a third rate wrestler. I might respect you but you've gone over the line, bald boy. You're messing with what you can't afford, the Nature Boy will teach you the Ric Flair lesson. To be second best ain't easy but you can strive for it, to be number one, don't bother, the position's taken. Whoo! Besides, I've got hair, you're a sorry sight compared to the styler and profiler. Whoo!"

The PPV showdown is set up for seven weeks time. Excellent hype and advertising is a must; a good undercard naturally and a thankyou note is sent to Vince from Ted plus free tickets to attend.

An important point must be decided. If Hogan is hesitant you tempt him with the carrot. The NWA title. That will do it, as Hogan, like Buddy Rogers, will be a 2 federation champ. Even Flair won't do this (you can just see Vince giving Ric the WWF strap). Of course if Hogan gets the strap a little controversy is a must. It then sets up Starrcade '90. The First PPV called "The Night Forever" has another wrestler forgotten under the ring for the whole night. Tully Blanchard is paid to "lay low."

There is not heel/face differentiation for the "Night Forever" just Flair v Hogan. Apter goes mad, PWI out sells itself whilst Tully waits patiently under the ring. After Flair carries Hogan for the whole match (definitely not the other way around) kicks out of the leg drop Flair gains the ascendancy. As he's about to score the win Tully hands Hogan the NWA belt and Hogan clobbers Flair with it - Ref Tommy Young misses the incident as only Young can, with his unique style - the count is done but not before Flair puts his foot-just prior to three-on the ropes. Tully shoves it off. Hogan celebrates, poses, flexes and out come Luger and Arn, to join him with Tully. A new band of men, Flair seeks revenge...With Sting, Flair goes through one to two lead up PPV events prior to Starrcade. The issue is not Hogan being heel with Tully and Arn but is Flair honest being a face? - its an angle with a difference; just two sides and each with their own following. Hogan expresses anger at Luger for being "too heel" and in one PPV event - a war games main event - Hogan evicts him. Another PPV has Hogan v Luger on top and after Hogan wins he tells Flair that's how it's done (Flair being "injured" by Luger's "foreign object" in the war games is special ref for the PPV - a strange entwining angle that continues to reach its peak at Starrcade). Hogan shoves Flair and poses off teasing him being a former champ. (It is important to grab a PPV with Luger v Hogan before Hogan gets jobbed out by Flair). As Tully and Arn continue to guard Hogan it finally gets down to a cage match for Starrcade '90 called "The Night of Dreams" so Flair has a chance to beat Hogan without stooges. Flair clearly pins Hogan to become THE wrestler which he always was.

Ted Turner - it is now up to you and whilst you've got the resources, know-how and Ric Flair you've got no more excuses. You now have the booking, here's hoping....



■ The Colossal Connection's (Haku and Andre) victory over Demolition for the tag team belts gave the WWF a first in more ways than one (and we don't mean just the fact that Andre actually won a title "legitimately"). The WWF usually records a month's worth of Superstars of Wrestling, 4 show's worth, at the one taping. That's why, for example, you'll see 4 consecutive weeks from the same arena.

When a title changes hands at a TV taping and that show hasn't been aired yet, the WWF doesn't acknowledge the title change until the show actually airs. So when the Brainbusters lost the belts to Demolition at a Superstars of Wrestling taping which wasn't due to air for two weeks, for those two weeks the Brainbusters continued to be announced as the tag team champs at all their area appearances. When the show aired, voile, overnight Demolition became champs again. This was a practice dating back to the beginning of the WWF in the early 1960's.

The only trouble is, that in recent times, the WWF has been getting a lot of exposure in the press and in one of those cataclysms when the wrestling world collided with the real world, the press suddenly began to notice the type of discrepancy I've just described. Why were the Brainbusters defending belts they'd lost two weeks previously? There was no good answer from the WWF.

As a result, when the Colossal Connection won the belts on 13th of December 1989 in Huntsville, Alabama, from their next arena appearances onwards they were already being billed as WWF tag team champs even though the title change would not air until sometime in January 1990.

■ In the nothing new under the sun department: The highlight of the NWA's Halloween Havoc was the tag team main event in the "Thunderdome" cage, billed as a first. Well, not quite. In 1987 Kevin Sullivan faced Bad News Allen (now Bad News Brown nee' Allan Coage) in a steel cage in Florida. Unlike previous cage matches that one had a roof and was billed as the Thunderdome. I suppose it doesn't surprise you to learn that Kevin Sullivan was on the booking committee for Halloween Havoc.

■ Lots of deja vu in the NWA these days with the return of the Four

## WRESTLING UPDATE

Horsemen and the Rock 'n' Roll Express feuding with the Midnight Express and Buzz Sawyer and Tommy Rich being inches away from another bloody feud. See above for nothing new under the sun department.

■ Better never than late department: The WWF's date in Oakland, California on the 26th of November 1989 was the worst type of disaster. 6,000 fans packed the auditorium but the wrestlers were held up in traffic jams on the way from an afternoon card in Fresno, California (about 3 1/2 hours drive away). Panicking, WWF officials sent out two preliminary wrestlers for the first match and then the only other two wrestler who were around to stall the crowd - the Ultimate Warrior and Andre the Giant.

Generally these guys have 20-30 second matches. Warrior and Andre nearly died from exhaustion in putting on a 30 minute match. It wasn't a pretty sight. Then followed a 45 minute intermission and a botched up Bobby Heenan interview. Giving up the fight, the WWF cancelled the rest of the show and offered refunds. Following the announcement, a number of wrestlers turned up. Too late, the arena was empty by then.

■ Akira Maeda's UWF created history on the 29th of December 1989 by packing in excess of 60,000 fans into the Tokyo Egg Dome for its "U-Cosmos" show. Not only did they sell US\$1.4 million worth of tickets in the first half hour but the total gate ended up being \$3.2 million. By comparison the U.S. record is \$1.6 million for Wrestlemania V at Trump Plaza.

In the main event Maeda made former Olympic judo medallist Willie Wilhelm of the Netherlands submit to a kneelock. The card was unique in that all but one match consisted of mixed matches between wrestlers and athletes in other fields.

■ The WWF has booked the Tokyo Egg Dome for April 1990, the same month as Wrestlemania VI from Toronto, and it will be very interesting to see how the

Japanese fans will react to the Titan hooplah and glitz.

■ Sid Vicious of the Skyscrapers, who was legitimately injured in New York Knockouts by Scott Steiner's blockbuster suplex, is not mending well after an operation for a punctured lung. Latest news from those bedside bookers at the NWA is that when he does return it will be as a babyface and then, only for as long as it takes Vince McMahon to lure him to the WWF. Not that they're exactly short of monsters there.

■ Hulk Hogan cracked the cover of the U.S. T.V. Guide in early December as one of the 20 biggest television stars of the 1980's in their retrospective. Being considered in the same league as Bill Cosby and Alf is somehow appropriate for the Hulkster.

■ The Great Muta, virtually the only Japanese star to get over in America, wasn't too thrilled at having to lose all his matches at the NWA's Starrcade 89. His return to the Japanese rings in February will now be slightly less than ecstatically received by Japanese fans who were hoping he would have taught the geijin wrestlers in the U.S. a thing or two.

■ Speaking of Starrcade 89, the Road Warriors lost by a pinfall to the Steiners in one of those finishes when Road Warrior Animal and Scott Steiner both hit the mat at the same time but Scott raised his at the count of 3. Still, when the Roadies have to do a job for someone there's always a payoff and here, of course, they wound up winning the tournament.

■ The sad story detailing the tragic love triangle between Tully Blanchard, the WWF and drugs has been covered fully in the Gossip line so no need to rehash it here. Interesting to note that Tully is supposedly going to work for the Coca Cola company in their marketing department. Hmm, from coke to Coke. It'll make a great movie one day.



■ Stan Hansen and Genichiro Tenryu defeated Jumbo Tsuruta and Yoshiaku Yatsu on the 6th of December 1989 to win the All Japan tag team tournament before 15,000 fans. The result was no surprise but what was surprising was that in the rounds leading up to the final, former AWA champion Hansen was roundly booed by the fans in the matches against the British Bulldogs and the Can Am Express because he couldn't keep up with the younger guys. Audiences, like kids, can be very cruel. But then so's age.

■ Remember the Jumping Bomb Angels in the WWF 3 years ago? The NWA is now negotiating to bring in 4 Japanese girl wrestlers including the deliciously evil Bull Nakano to work some dates in February (I have it on good authority that Leapin' Larry L is furiously saving his shackles to buy a one way air ticket).

■ Legendary midget wrestler Lord Littlebrook is now managing the New Zealand Militia in the NWA and has got them wearing Beefeater uniforms.

■ Klutz of any year award: In a short 2 minute match between Kevin Sullivan and Eddie Gilbert, Sullivan accidentally stomped on Gilbert's ankle causing a hairline fracture. Gilbert tried to roll out of the ring but fell badly, injuring his shoulder with a rotator cuff injury. Despite all this, Gilbert was only hospitalized for a night.

■ Wrestling legend Haystacks Calhoun passed away in his home town of McKinney, Texas on the 7th of December 1989 aged 55. Haystacks was one of the most popular matmen of all time, capitalizing on his country origins by putting on those overalls and the lucky horseshoe. And the fact that he weighted in at 601 pounds didn't hurt his popularity either.

On his Australian tour Haystacks was always introduced as coming from Morgans Corner Arkansas and used to get on famously with Jack Little. No-one who grew up in the sixties will forget the time he broke the ring on World Championship Wrestling with his famous splash.

Haystacks never made a lot of money out of wrestling and in his later years, after an operation to amputate a leg left him very much housebound, he spent a destitute existence in his trailer home in McKinney visited only by his mother and daughter. We'll

never forget - and neither will the Leapster

■ It started off as a normal interview in the days preceding Wrestlemania I. Comedian Richard Belzer was interviewing Mr T and Hulk Hogan on his T.V. show "Hot Properties". Belzer good-humouredly asked Hogan to demonstrate a hold on him and Hogan obliged with a front facelock. The front facelock is one of those legitimate type moves that can actually hurt an

## WRESTLING Information Line



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UPDATED EVERY WEEK



PH: 0055-12308

opponent when applied correctly - wrestling great Strangler Lewis used to use it as his finishing hold.

Anyway, Hogan applied the hold on Belzer but put too much pressure on and Belzer fainted, hitting his head on the way down. Belzer required 9 stitches. Belzer sued Hogan and Titan (the company that is the WWF) for \$5 million. The lawsuit was settled out of court in January 1990 for an undisclosed sum, mostly because Vince McMahon wanted as little

publicity as possible and couldn't afford to let Hogan take the stand.

■ The 28th of January 1989 match between the British Bulldogs and Joe and Dean Malenko was named Japanese tag team match of the year by Japan's wrestling mags.

■ Most WWF wrestlers are very annoyed at Hulk Hogan's "Star" attitude. A card on the 19th of January in St Louis drew 8,500 fans to see the main event of Hogan v Perfect. Hogan no-showed because his plane had been diverted to Memphis due to bad weather and no flights were available from Memphis to St. Louis.

All the other wrestlers had to drive to St Louis and Hogan had plenty of time to drive from Memphis had he chosen to. It seems he didn't choose to and the fans were told all evening that Hogan might be coming even though WWF officials knew that was an impossibility.

■ Akeem's been out of action for an operation on his ulcer and the Widow Maker has still to see the inside of a ring since his last match in October 1989.

■ Finally, pro wrestling came to the Soviet Union in a big way on New Years Eve when 15,000 fans went to a sellout card at Lenin Stadium for New Japan's latest wrestling coup. The main event saw Antonio Inoki and Shota Chochyashvili (1972 Olympic gold in judo) defeat Brad Rheingans and Masa Saito (both great Olympic and pro-wrestlers).

In addition Rikki Choshu pinned Victor Zangiev and Bam Bam Bigelow defeated Vladimir Berkovich. And there is no truth to the rumour that Chochyashvili's finishing move is called the Glasnost deathlock. It's more like the Perestroika power slam.

■ See you at the matches - even if it's only in front of a video screen.

BY LAZ 'DR.' D



# Your Guide to **PUB CONVERSATION STARTERS** (FIRST OF AN INFERIOR SERIES)

by Leapin' Larry L

They didn't have ratings for Sunday afternoon television back in the early 70's heyday of World Championship Wrestling. If they did, it would still be running. In the schools, the factories, offices, in many a communal lavatory, and probably the playing fields of Eton Monday, eardrums were a-clatter with verbally recounted tumult from the weekend's wrestling shows. (National package Saturdays, with the suspiciously named ref Wallaby Bob McMasters; the big local show with the interviews bashing the upcoming Festival Hall angles on the Sunday).

We may never again see a regular weekly series with that sort of audience and skull penetration level - whether or not they were among the feral S.R.O. throng at Festival Hall every week, everyone knew what was going on with this stuff. If I had to put a figure on it, my guess is that average ratings would have been 35s to 40s, maybe higher, and as high as 50s for a show with a heavily pushed hot angle. People with any idea of TV ratings, and what shows rate these days will know that these figures are completed beyond all credibility. I insist to you that if they'd have McNair-Andersoned this little baby back then, the figures wouldn't have just defied mere credibility, but to quote footy commentator and visionary Jack Dyer, they would have been "beyond all result." If we're talking share of sets currently operating, instead of hard ratings, I reckon they were doing up to 70s, unless there was a particularly hot Jerry Lewis & Dean Martin movie on another channel, but even then probably not.

Anyway, that's all just to segue into this gentleman's excuse-me of a series, yakking about hits and memories that always comes up when a couple of people get together who were indoctrinated with this stuff during their tender-headed formative years. I'll just blow this time-travel pitch-pipe, and then you can all hum along with me.

## HAYSTACKS CALHOUN BREAKS THE RING

Haystacks (and note that first name; with the 's' thanks; everything about Haystacks was plural) weighed around 615lbs back when they had lbs, but in Australian this was around 44 stone. For those that don't remember Haystacks did a gentle giant hillbilly gimmick, pretty much like Uncle Elmer, but from memory, he wasn't quite that horrible a wrestler. Obviously with a gut that sleeps three like H.C. had, you gotta have a finisher which is a variant on the big splash. I don't remember what they called his, but it was the big splash alright. Another thing you get to do when you're a big fat wrestler is wrestle handicap matches against two loser-types on television, and back then Haystacks and Andre the Giant were about the only ones who did.

So this TV match featured Haystacks vs two of the local lonesome losers (don't remember if it was Jan Jansen, or Fred Burger or one of Cons Tolios & Dandos or Eric Froelich or Erich Maria Remarque for that matter, sue me) and after he'd pruned the two of them and lined 'em up, he predictably went for the big splash. What was not predictable and what had commentator Jack Little doing what sounded like the funky chicken in the commentary booth, was when he landed, Haystacks broke the ring. Not snapped it, not frayed it, not crimped it; he broke it. It was like reality had been swept away as a flimsy contrivance and fresh new dimensions of possibility had bloomed on the Admiral lowboy 26" console. As Jack L. went absolutely stratosphere-nutso like the commentary position had suddenly become the missionary position there it was: the gaping tear in the canvas and the busted ring floor giving a glimpse of the unseen dark dimensions below. Imagine what a Freudian grappling consultant could make of this.

In case you're wondering, I've got no idea whether this was a planned angle or not. You'd think it was, but I don't remember, even allowing for Rose Coloured 20/20 hindsight, that it looked staged; and it wouldn't be the easiest thing in the world to do. I do remember the upshot gimmick though. For the remaining weeks of this season, we were tirelessly reminded that the ring was now 'specially reinforced' due to Haystacks' vigilante gut-action. This, I feel is the sort of immortality we could all consider aspiring to.

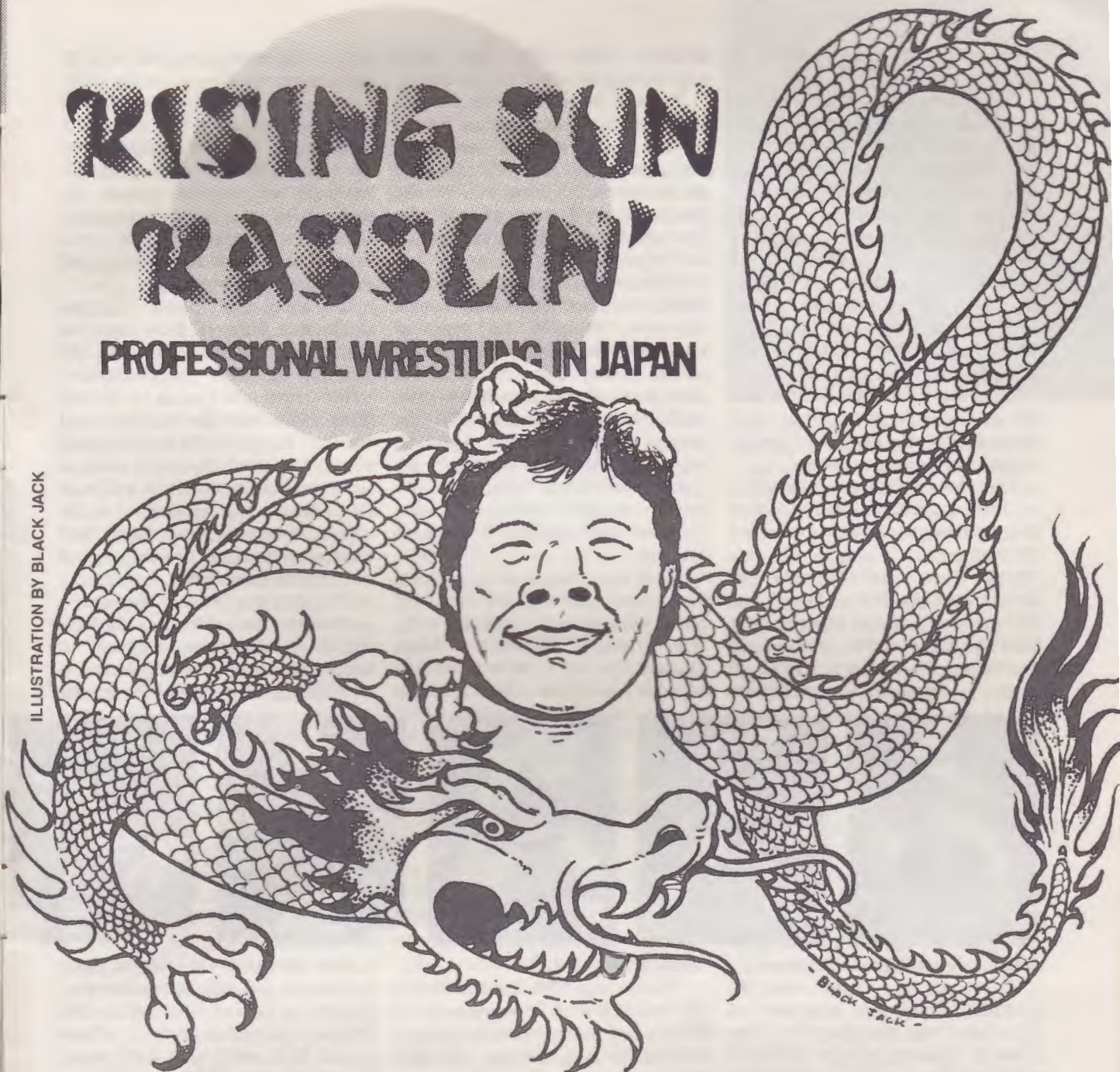
*(Still to come; Waldo the Nazi & his vanishing Swastika; Fred Blassie's cream cake etiquette; people jumping off ladders onto Pepper Gomez; and the strangely recurring suitcase gimmick. Memories that made a nation.)*



# RIISING SUN RASSLIN'

## PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING IN JAPAN

ILLUSTRATION BY BLACK JACK



**Part Three - The dragon appears in Japanese legend as a mythical beast which represents domination, resilience, honour and strength. But the dragon is only a mythical creature. Dragons don't really exist.**

### Tatsumi Fujinami

In the history of wrestling there is one man of whom it can be said was the balance between a whole promotion surviving or collapsing. The year was 1984 and the

circumstances were to fully test the loyalty, talent and popularity of Japanese superstar Tatsumi Fujinami, considered by the people who know as arguably the greatest of all Japanese wrestlers, and one of the 25 all-time best wrestlers in the world ever.

It is said behind every good story is another equally good story. Last issue in *PILEDRIIVER* we examined the career of "The Cat", Antonio Inoki, and the near demise in '84 of his highly regarded promotion, the New Japan Pro Wrestling company.

His rival Japanese promoters would have been glad to see Inoki's

New Japan fail in 1984, but none more so than main rival promoter and sworn enemy Shohei "Giant" Baba. Baba had long been playing second fiddle both at the gate and on TV to Inoki.

**BY MATT HOLDSWORTHY**

When Giant Baba learnt of the dissatisfaction amongst wrestlers at rival Inoki's promotion he moved quickly to manipulate things behind the scenes to lure almost a dozen top wrestlers from New Japan to join his company, All Japan. Amongst the migrating talent were Riki Choshu, Yoshiaki Yatsy, and Animal



Hamaguchi, all top drawcards in Japan.

This was big news in Japan, and an incredible shock not only to Inoki and his New Japan but also for all wrestling fans. The move could have only one inevitable and disastrous outcome - the demise of New Japan! Everyone was amazed at just how far Giant Baba would go to destroy his rival company. Baba, of course, pretended to be astonished when confronted with the news. Said Baba, "Inoki lacks ability. He has brought all of this upon himself."

Baba's ultimate goal was to lure every single wrestler from New Japan to join his company, leaving nothing but fading memories.

The jump by the other wrestlers was such a severe blow to New Japan that the newspapers were predicting the demise of Inoki's outfit. The only person who stood between the survival or extinction of New Japan (the group which had brought more talented workers into professional wrestling in the last ten years than all other Japanese promotions

distance with older and more experienced wrestlers.

Even in his earliest pro days he was keen to exercise and stay fit, and to this day he remains one of the best-conditioned pros. He acquired the nickname "The Dragon" from the small and loyal group of fans who first adopted the talented new-comer and began following his career.

Fujinami's rise to the top was initially slow and uneventful. He paid his dues, doing 6 1/2 years of unglamorous jobbing, but when his chance finally came he took full advantage of his opportunity and utilised his vast experience. His first minor recognition came when he won the "Young Lions Cup", the annual New Japan tournament for prelim wrestlers which generally predates their getting a push to notoriety.

Soon after, Fujinami was chosen to become New Japan's first ever junior heavyweight champion by New Japan's promoter Hisashi Shinma. His rise from here on was meteoric and has since become

heavyweights. Fujinami and the other New Japan wrestlers of similar build were capable of doing complicated aerial and mat moves that the bulkier men simply couldn't manage. Their versatility was enthusiastically received and quickly caught the imagination of the action-seeking Japanese wrestling public who flocked to see this fast moving and visually exciting wrestling.

The addition of Tatsumi Fujinami to the title ranks of New Japan as junior heavyweight champion (he also won the WWF junior title from WWF jobber Jose Estrada on January 23rd, 1978) was the launching pad for what has proved to be a long and eventful career. Fujinami rose to become a leading attraction and huge box office draw, culminating in his superstardom at New Japan and ultimately the status of living legend he enjoys in Japan today.

Furthermore, it was Fujinami's success that paved the way for Riki Choshu and Satoru Sayama to become superstar lightweights too.

Although he has spent the greater



combined) was Tatsumi Fujinami.

Fujinami was thrust into the spotlight. Every fan, pro and anti New Japan was watching him. They knew if Fujinami jumped to Baba's All Japan they would be witnessing the end of Inoki's New Japan because TV would most certainly drop his wrestling show which was vital to their survival. They'd all be out of work. Sayohnara, NJPW!

Tatsumi Fujinami (his real name) is 170cm (5'8 1/2") and weighs in at 94 kilograms (238lbs). Born on the 23rd of December, 1953, his hometown is Musashi, Japan. Fujinami commenced wrestling as a professional at the age of 17 on May 19, 1971. He weighed then only 65 kg (160lbs) but, although he was smaller than most of his opponents, with his enormous stamina he proved to be more than capable of going the

legendary.

Shinma was New Japan's booker up until '83 when it was discovered he was embezzling several wrestlers salaries to help finance his own business investments including an interest in the failed Antonio Inoki business in Brazil, Anton High Cell Ltd. (See last issue for more details). But Shinma also gave modern-day heroes Riki Choshu and Satoru "Tiger Mask" Sayama the push necessary to create a new Japanese boom, junior heavyweight champs. After Shinma was booted out Inoki became the most powerful man behind the scenes at New Japan.

Shinma decided after seeing how well Fujinami was getting across to the crowds, despite his comparatively small size, that he should build a whole new class of under-200 pounders to compliment the

part of his career wrestling in Japan he has also appeared and proven very popular in Hawaii, and Taiwan and Pakistan. As well as his fabulous solo record Fujinami is also well versed and highly successful in the art of tag team wrestling. In December, 1984, he partnered Antonio Inoki to win his first IWGP World Tag Team tournament defeating Dick Murdoch and Adrian Adonis. Then he won it a second time the following year, teamed with NJ's Kengo Kimura defeating Inoki and Seiji Sakaguchi. In 1981 Fujinami dropped his lightweight ranking and moved up to the heavyweights.

Fujinami and his former tag team partner Riki Choshu had an enormous feud both in and out of the ring where both men were the leaders of rival "armies" of wrestlers. It was so successful with the fans it lasted



for almost two years between 1982 to 1984 and was over the (now defunct) WWF International title.

For several seasons in the late 1970's Fujinami also wrestled in Southern California defending his title there, though he never broke into the American pro scene at that time in the big way he may have hoped he might. Although a major star in Japan it was a long time yet before Fujinami was to gain wide recognition in the U.S., remaining instead a relative unknown to all but a few hardcore American wrestling fans.

Many of his fans wondered at the time why "The Dragon" wasn't making a greater effort to crack the lucrative U.S. market. After all, in Japan he was a widely respected and well paid star. Couldn't he transfer that success to the American scene, considered the yardstick for measuring real talent and the Mecca for big reputations and big bucks?

His loyal legion of Japanese fans knew Fujinami was the best, an expert at putting it all together in the ring. His repertoire included technically perfect moves, realistic and generous selling, convincing power, wrestling and submission holds, and seemingly limitless stamina. And if the moment demanded it he was more than capable of shedding all technique and holding his own as an all-out full-on brawler.

As is the case with all top performers, Fujinami was paid a large salary in Japan, but to appear in America with little if any reputation in that country would have meant a huge drop in wages. And it was unlikely any U.S. promoter would give an unknown, no matter how big in his own country, any sort of a push.

Furthermore, the Japanese style of work is vastly different to the popular American style. That is to say, the Japanese style is superior in every way.

The average U.S. fan is content with the slower, less technically complicated American style of match which involves enormous build-up and prematch razzamattaz and gimmickry and usually very little actual ring action, whereas Fujinami has no need for a gimmick and his matches may last up to an hour, and

that's a full hour of relentless and fast paced top class wrestling inside the ring!

Just as the 'Hollywood' style of wrestling is foreign to Fujinami his technically superior style of wrestling would not have sat comfortably with the U.S. fans. In a way Fujinami was overqualified to work in America in the early '80's. But times and situations change, and later on in his career he had reason to rethink his position and "invade" America. However, that's still in the future and we've still to see how events turn out after 1984's desertions by Choshu and the dozen other wrestlers, leaving New Japan's survival hanging in the balance and depending upon Tatsumi Fujinami.

Antonio Inoki at this time remained New Japan's top star but it was well known his heir apparent was Fujinami. Choshu was No.3 and painfully aware he may never have a shot at the title, the belt which was as good as around The Dragon's waist.

It was under these circumstances and with the promise of a title that Giant Baba was able to lure the ambitious Riki Choshu and his army away from Inoki to join All Japan. The reported A\$1.8 million paid to them must have also played some small part in it too.

Giant Baba also attempted unsuccessfully to snare Fujinami who was quoted at the time as saying, "Money can't buy me. I know both the good and bad sides of Inoki. Choshu can only see his bad side. I see his good points."

That may well have been the case, but Fujinami had more to lose than Choshu by jumping. Firstly, of course, there was the No.1 spot. Fujinami had long been Inoki's understudy, being carefully groomed to one day step into Inoki's shoes as New Japan's top star. Fujinami was promised that if he stayed at New Japan his rightful top spot would be very soon in coming, that Inoki would step aside much sooner than he had promised before.

Ironically, Fujinami's title now depended as much upon his remaining at New Japan as New Japan's survival did. No Fujinami, no New Japan, no title.

Secondly, Fujinami was by this time an executive on the board of New Japan, so he also had important

financial interests to protect by staying. Naturally, Fujinami remaining at New Japan didn't automatically guarantee its survival so he still faced the prospect of his whole world coming tumbling down all about him at any moment. The fact was though that if he did for any reason suddenly sign with Giant Baba at All Japan it would have sounded the death knell for New Japan.

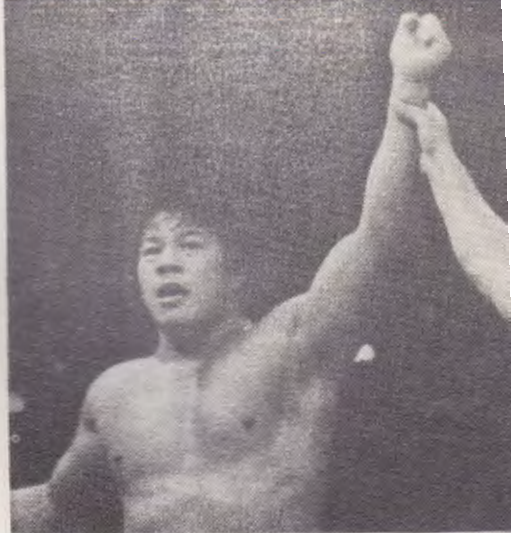
The fans knew their beloved group faced bankruptcy and total loss of talent without Fujinami. Without him New Japan would lose its coverage on Japanese TV-Asahi which was vital for survival, reportedly worth A\$1.5 million a year to the promotion.

Giant Baba could not have been more pleased with how events were proceeding. He even (anonymously) organised for a wreath to be sent to Antonio Inoki representing the death of his New Japan company.

But Baba may have been a bit premature in his action.

Akira Maeda left New Japan in 1984 to join the (original) UWF which was formed that year by the man who had given him his start at New Japan, Hisashi Shinma. Shinma wanted Maeda as his top star and Maeda had no hesitation in jumping to the UWF.

The UWF struggled along for a year or so before it folded and Maeda returned to New Japan in '86. This took some of the pressure off Fujinami but Choshu was still drawing enormous attendances and TV ratings for All Japan, and, what's more, his influence was so great that all the other wrestlers at All Japan were putting in the best performances of their lives.





The outcome was New Japan was just managing to survive whilst All Japan was breaking all records. Antonio Inoki was desperate to lure Riki Choshu back to New Japan and in this he had luck on his side. Not that Inoki's offer to return was too good to refuse, but Baba himself was unknowingly or short-sightedly mistreating his star, and acting indifferently to his needs.

Baba was bringing in Hiroshi Wajima to All Japan, a legendary sumo star but a no-talent in the wrestling game. Choshu's ego was being bruised - he threatened to leave if Baba gave Wajima a push. Choshu's ego was being further battered by the popularity of his tag-team partner Yoshiaki Yatsu who was beginning to outshine him in the ring. Choshu had just turned 35 and must have felt his form was slipping, even though he remained enormously popular with the fans.

Finally, the public seemed to be yearning for the classic old matches Choshu used to have with Tatsumi Fujinami. As Inoki was quick to point out, there was only one way Choshu could ever wrestle Fujinami again - by returning to New Japan. So that's why Choshu returned to New Japan, officially, on the 1st of June, 1987. That, and an enormous amount of money. Most of his army followed him back to Inoki. The crisis was over. New Japan was saved.

But who did Inoki turn his back on after the drama of the last three years was over? Tatsumi Fujinami, that's who. The Dragon was just about breathing fire, too, with the way things had turned out. After carrying New Japan through the crisis he was now the forgotten man.

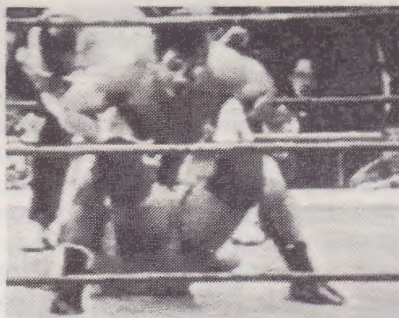
Having been promised the top spot, what happened was he fell to 3rd. spot with Maeda's return and now with Choshu back he was demoted to 4th spot. He was fading fast. The hurt from the broken promises was also breaking his spirit. The lack of gratitude and recognition for his service was affecting his mental attitude and his form began to slip.

Tatsumi had been loyal and patient and this was the thanks he got. Insulted and angry he threatened to quit New Japan if he wasn't made No.1. Inoki couldn't ignore him any

longer. This was a serious threat and had to be treated as such.

As it happened a week later Inoki was injured and forced out of wrestling for 3 months. Fujinami's time had come. Inoki's title was declared vacant. In a titanic tussle on May 7th, 1988, at the Ariake Colosseum in Tokyo Fujinami defeated Big Van Vader (Leon White) to become New Japan's top star, winning its World heavyweight belt. And about time too!

Fujinami held the title through the summer, but his time at the top was short lived. Hardly had he had time to get used to wearing the belt when Inoki, recovered from his injury,



*Fujinami applies one of his powerful submission holds.*

made his move to regain the title - not through the physical exertion of a wrestling match but by using blackmail tactics.

Walking out, Inoki threatened New Japan with an ultimatum. He would never return unless he was restored to the top spot.

Inoki wasn't bluffing but he also knew he had nothing to lose. He was far more valuable in New Japan's current safe climate than Fujinami was. He also owned the company. The decision was a foregone conclusion. Inoki came back with all of his demands met. He was reinstated as president (though it's doubtful he ever really relinquished the position) and took back No.1 spot. As president he threatened that anyone who didn't do as he was told would be given their marching orders.

Fujinami decided enough was enough. Time to tackle that U.S. 'invasion' he had put off for so long. Nothing was standing in his way, and he ended up having a very successful American tour. In Portland he won the Pacific Northwest title from The Grapppler, then later had unification matches (ending in disqualification)

against World title claimants Jerry Lawler from the AWA in Memphis, and Kerry Von Erich from World Class Wrestling in Dallas.

Fujinami returned to Japan in time to compete in the tag team tournament and before the year was out captured the World Class title from Von Erich in Tokyo.

After what, by Fujinami's standards, was a poor year in 1987 he picked up again in 1988 following his highly courageous stand at New Japan and highly successful visit to America, to the point where he once again was performing as one of the best wrestlers in the world. Unfairly, he still wasn't being recognised or rewarded as such by his own promotion.

Fujinami toured the U.S. often in early '89 as IWGP champion and cemented a solid reputation internationally. He only had a short time in the No.1 spot at New Japan but recently the ambitious Inoki entered politics and it's rumoured he'll retire soon from active wrestling. This leaves the way clear for Fujinami to fill the top spot, at least it would, but for one complication.....

Tatsumi held a press conference in late '89 to explain he was taking a break for several months due to a very painful back injury he had sustained in the ring. This is quite true and only a complete rest from wrestling will cure it. In his press conference Fujinami intimated he would only recommence if his bad back was completely better, not wanting to compromise his workmanship or credibility by wrestling at less than peak physical condition.

For nearly two decades he has been the yardstick by which to judge the standard of other wrestlers. Only time will tell if we have seen the end of his outstanding career. Few superstars have the decency to retire whilst they're still at the top, and although presently in early, if only temporary forced retirement, Fujinami wouldn't be the sort to hang around once he felt he was wrestling at less than 100%. Let's hope we see his return soon.

The dragon is a cornerstone in Japanese mythology. The Dragon, Tatsumi Fujinami, has proven the myth wrong. Dragons do exist.

*Next Issue: The colourful, controversial, charismatic champion Riki Choshu.*





*Like groin-shots  
through the undercard of  
existence, these are....*

# The Best Matches of Our Lives

★ ★ ★ ■ by Leapin' Larry L. ■ ★ ★ ★

*Since Dr D slung me in as the foreign object to do the 'Hot Matches' memory row shot for this issue, I been thinkin' about criteria, thinkin' about how much you actually remember **about** matches, as opposed to hot moves or angles, thinkin' about how not to list seven or eight Ric Flair matches, and in general, in the fierce mutter of Randy Savage, "I been thinkin' thinkin', **thinkin'**..."*

And so I think. I figure if you're a wrestling fan, you see more matches than the factory supervisor at Bryant and May, so if you actually remember something with any fondness, it must have been The Stuff, y'know. I've plumped for stuff that sticks in the craw of my memory, and this article is a self-applied Heimlich Manoeuvre. Or, to put it another way:

Picked me some matches,  
None with Ron Wood-y;  
They're not all cherry  
But they're oldies and they're goodies

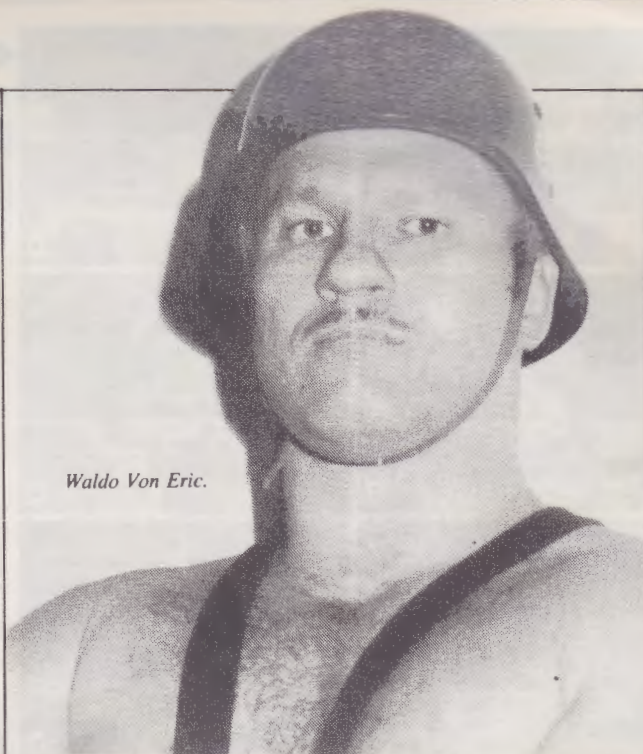
Ahem. Onwards.

## Mario Milano v Waldo Von Erich

(World Championship Wrestling, Australia)

One of the few World Championship matches that really stays in the memory, the way parmesan cheese lingers in the air at the lunch table just when you're feeling a bit queasy from a hangover. This was towards the end of the real glory period of WCW, I'd guess around '74 or '75. It was also one of the very rare decent 'match-ups' you'd get on the Sunday TV show, and when you did get these you'd get a clean finish. This had Waldo Von Erich, ever an effective heel in those more Bruce Ruxton-ish days when Australia still led the world in hating our WW11 enemies 30 years after the fact, as the holder of the Austra-Asian title. Mario was by then well-established as the only local to equal the tourists as a name face.

There was no particular reason I can remember to expect that this match would do anything other than end up in a massive run-in by every slacks-and-body-shirt clad or suds-covered wrestler in the joint. Or some standard fooferah ending with Waldo loading his boot or glove. Actually it was a long, storytelling sort of match, about as clean as you can get with a Nazi in there, with the advantage swinging one way, then the other right through the 20 minutes or so it lasted.



Waldo Von Eric.

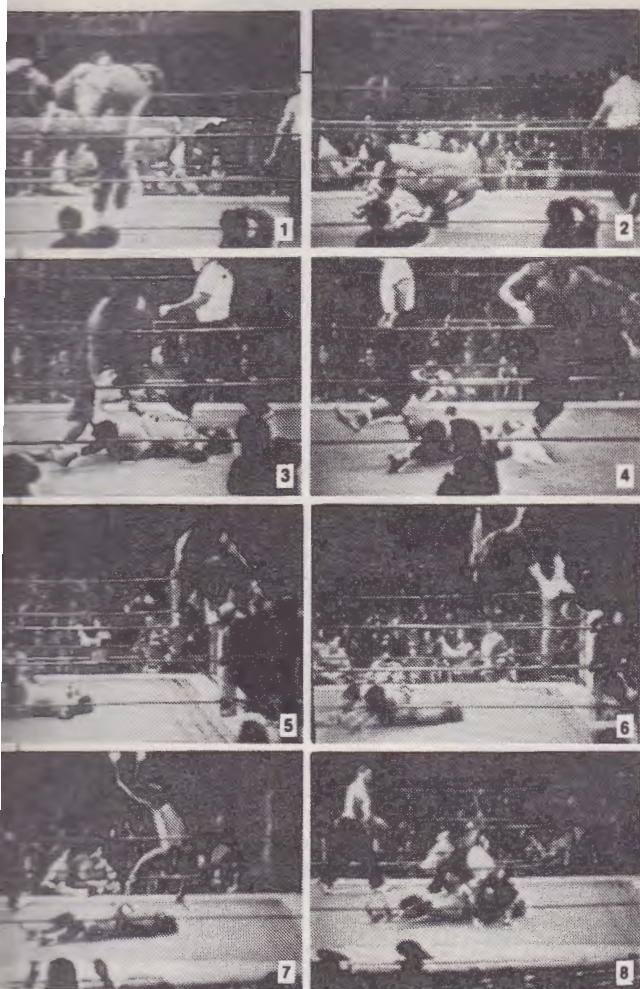
The story it basically told was that hungry clean-cut scientific Mediterranean guy Mario took the desperate but out-of-ideas Waldo to the edge of his abilities, then beyond. Mario won clean, with a pinfall as I remember, after using his pet Abdominal Stretch a couple of times to soften WVE up. Never forgotten the mark rush I got out of Mario winning that title clean **right there on TV**, and (though I didn't know the term at the time) how well it was booked, because of the clarity of the storytelling, and how it seemed like such an epic match, you even felt almost a bit sorry for Waldo at the end. I have no doubt that seen now, it wouldn't exactly be Flair/Steamboat 11 from '89, but I like to think that if that tape hadn't been long wiped for a "Here's Humphrey" episode, it would still be as enjoyable now. I'm dead sure that kids'd still pop if they did the gimmick now and had a clean face title win on a WWF or NWA TV squash show.

## Tats Fujinami & Keiji "F-ing Great" Muto v Nobuhiko Takada & Shiro Koshinaka

(New Japan)

The Japanese high-spot match, writ large as they say in the classifieds. Takada was back from his UWF spot here and happily intent on kicking the stuffing out of anything that moved, and not much else. Koshinaka, wrestling in the fetching judo pants, had the neck snapping german suplexes and his patented butt-bump into the corner going. These were the new guard. Super stiff action, kicks and suplexes and submission moves, and the look like they could do some serious back alley damage to you if they felt like it. Muto could do the kicking and 'serious' stuff, if not with the same conviction, but had the flying stuff and acrobatics nicely mixed in with some venom. He's the link man. Fujinami is the old guard, doing ropes moves, and some U.S. style stuff that the youngsters aren't too keen on selling for. He also does some of the wild suplex and submission stuff. He's the secret weapon here - taking outrageous bumps from disc-crushing Koshinaka suplexes and being utterly obliging about Takada's attempts to kick-sculpt his head into a landscape of London after the bombing. They get plenty of heat on him, there's hot tags for Muto, some remarkable repeat kicks by Takada that send the crowd all googly inside, Fujinami's comeback, and just a





stream of big high spots leading to one of those confusing Japanese endings that I honestly can't even remember now. Everything that's done in this is done so well, you'll feel like the intrepid letter writer to a Penthouse "Forum" column who remarked of some "telltale stains" on a woman's garment: "I was proud to know I'd put them there."

## BRAWLS

*I actually prefer technical styles of matches, being one of the few non-Nipponese people on the planet who doesn't lapse into a coma watching one of Inoki's bald ugly Soviet ex-olympians rolling around on the mat with Hiro Hase or Mr. Saito. But you gotta respect a gnarly wild knuckle-fest, and these are my favourites.*

### PIPER v ORNDORFF

(WWF)

This was a TV match from around '86, I guess, with Piper as lead heel and Paul Orndorff, at his most human-grimace intense as the good guy. After a bit of Piper byplay, they tore into each other like they hated each other's guts, did no 'wrestling' moves, instead just took turns sitting on each other throwing a lot of fist-meat, and looking like a twin Saturday night grievous bodily harm case. After four or five minutes of this, they rolled out of the ring still thumping each other, proceeded down the aisle, under the commentary scaffold, past the end of the seating, and out the back entrance still lamming into each other. The colour and movement of this timelessly beautiful spudhead ballet always pacifies this simple soul.

## RIC FLAIR v TERRY FUNK

(NWA, '89)

The 'I Quit' match from New York State. King of the Jungle, Top of the Heap, A-Number One - of course we're not talking about New York; that's just Ric Flair, a person often accused of being the 80's finest professional wrestler. In this one, he brawls as good guy, crippled-up 45 year old ('Middle Aged & Crazy') Terry Funk is the most desperate and lunatic of bad guys, and they barroom brawl around the ring and surrounds, with fists, legs, elbows, chairs, tables, guard-rails as the crowd happily explode their underwear.

Flair takes every body-language, miming, intestine-jarring, pinpoint timing, means possible to get the story over, and to make himself look like what he is in a weird way, the best wrestler in the world. But Funk steals the show. Takes insane falls. Puts Flair over with a clean, realistic submission, gets his chest skin cleanly removed like a diet-chicken breast fillet, and takes one of my all time favourite bumps, when Flair slug him, and TF slides the entire length of a long table, and rockets off head-first into a chair.

Unlike the Orndorff/Piper, this had carefully timed swing and variations in the 'story' and if the former match was a great hamburger, Funk/Flair is a great 25 course meal with Diet soft-drink banned from the building.

## OTHER STUFF

### Owen Hart vs Hiro Hase

(New Japan)

### Owen Hart vs Keiichi Yamada

(New Japan)

We already knew that no-one else had Hart's creativity or insanity when it came to flying moves, and that he was versatile, made the matches look tough and the work look easy, and was technically sweet as a candy statue of William Conrad.

In these matches he showed more of that and wrestled as a Flair type heel as well, showed he could manipulate an audience, and had great waltz partners, The rolling scissors finisher he uses in one of these is worthy of "Mondo Cane". The hold-swapping pas de deux he and Hase indulge in is even better than their Canadian matches.

### Brett Hart/Jim Neidhart vs Dynamite Kid Davey Boy Smith

(WWF, around '86)

Not that long after the Bulldogs joined up, and before either team held the tag title, they met in a match that was screened here on "All American Wrestling". It had all the set-pieces executed with brisk freshness (Hart's face forward bump into the t'buckle, the snap suplex, the rocket-launcher variant) and a most un-WWF like attitude in that it looked stiff as a wrought-iron cushion, and neither team did stalling or character stuff, just tooth-bustin' business.

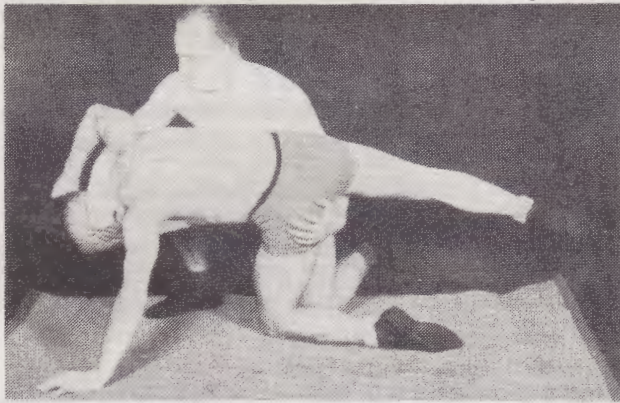
Also went to a time-limit draw, which was unexpected and added legitimacy. With Savage/Steamboat from Wrestlemania III, this is my favourite WWF match of the modern (Hogan as champ) era.

*That's all for now. In the event that the Doc ever gives me another shot, I promise to cover the overwhelming, if obscure sports classic I saw live at the A.M. Rogers Hall, Balwyn High School featuring the Relief P.E. Teacher up against the unparalleled tag team of Wheelhouse, Mottram and Fousoulas. Till then, keep a-hold of your tag ropes.*



# KNOW YOUR HOLD

Reprinted from 3LO radio's broadcaster, Norman McCance's 1927 handbook, "Wrestling holds illustrated and wrestling records"



HALF-NELSON and CRUTCH-HOLD demonstrated by Wood on Law. Wood is here seen applying the half-nelson with his right hand and arm and the crutch-hold with his left hand, on Law's right side.

## Pro Wrestlers Real Names

■ Andre the Giant - Andre Rousimoff • Giant Baba - Shohei Baba • Brutus Beefcake - Edward Leslie • Riki Choshu - Mitsuo Yoshida • Junkyard Dog - Sylvester Ritter • Hulk Hogan - Terry Bollea • Nikita Koloff - Scott Simpson • Lex Luger - Larry Pfohl • Rowdy Roddy Piper - Roderick Toombs • Dusty Rhodes - Virgil Runnels Jnr. • Road Warrior Animal - Joe Laurinidas • Road Warrior Hawk - Michael Hegstrand • Jake "The Snake" Roberts - Aurelian Smith Jnr. • Rick Rude - Richard Rood • Randy "Macho Man" Savage - Randy Poffo • Elizabeth - Elizabeth Poffo (Savage's valet and wife) • Ricky "The Dragon" Steamboat - Richard Blood • George "The Animal" Steele - James Meyers • Jesse "The Body" Ventura - James Janos • Nikolai Volkoff - Joe Peruziak • Kerry Von Erich - Kerry Adkisson • Butch Miller - Robert Miller • Big Bossman - Raymond Taylor • Abdullah the Butcher - Larry Shreeve • Leapin' Larry L. - Bouncin' Belvedere B. • Hercules - Ray Fernandez • Honky Tonk Man - Wayne Ferris • Rick Steiner - Rob Rechsteiner • Scott Steiner - Scott Rechsteiner • Sid Vicious - Sidney Eudy.

## grunts and groans

Dear Piledriver

Only Jim Bob and readers can shed a tear and sink a beer in quiet celebration that despite all the pompous facade that is the Melbourne Nightclub scene it's greatest prize, it's crown jewel is getting Crown Lager spilt on it at Jim Bob's pad.

There are two reasons to keep your eye out for. Firstly the second edition of Piledriver, the Australian produced professional wrestling magazine which has grown to A4 size and into one of the best wrestling reads ever. For under \$4 at Minotaur Books, Missing Link, Au-Go-Go, Collector's Corner and Melbourne Sports Books you get plenty of laughs and info on the W.W.F, N.W.A, Jap Wrestling and Australian wrestling history. With Danger Low Brow's Leaping Larry L and Dennis Twilight contributing articles and a Rowdy Roddy Piper poster you can't go past. The Hulk Hogan cover story is also an incredible read if you want the true story of the rise of Terry Bollea.

The second mag is it Feast, which features such things as a crossword where every clue is 'slang for ...ina'. These guys pull no punches and the fact that you've never seen the thing is coz of defamation suit city.

From In-Press-Melbourne January 3rd issue, 1990.

## LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

This issue we've invited special guest Matt Holdsworth to reply to our mail. Matt's contributions have prompted some very critical comments from our readers but much to our surprise he was most willing at short notice to sift through the hundreds of letters piling up in our office and "chose without bias and with obvious impartiality" (his words) a fair cross-section of letters representing your views of last issue...

Dear Piledriver magazine, I have just read the first two editions of Piledriver and admit it has exceeded my expectations, keep up the good work.

However I would like to single out Matt Holdsworth. His article in Piledriver2 on Hulk Hogan was the best piece of wrestling journalism I've ever read (I subscribe to The Wrestler, Inside Wrestling and Pro Wrestling Illustrated). It was informative, based on facts and entertaining, moreover it was just what I wanted to read.

Hogan is one of the best and the credit he was given was long overdue.

I look forward to reading the next edition of Piledriver and some more great articles from Matt Holdsworth. Sincerely,

MICHAEL SIMPSON  
BRIGHTON, VICTORIA

Dear "Dr. D" I was happy that one of the principals of ARI sent me a copy of your fine new book, "PILEDRIVER", and I can only say that NO Aussie fan should leave home without a copy of it! The opinions you have in this mighty little book are "dead on" (right and true).... refreshing to see an honest publication!!!

Rather than try to explain myself, a copy of my magazine, THR #19, is enclosed for your reading pleasure. You may like to know that THR enjoys many Aussie readers. Feel free to mention THR to your readers, if you wish, and I welcome your letter or interest in this regards, hopefully, something GOOD can come of all this!

Best luck and wishes to you and your staff, from the USA!!! PS...I am also a co-writer of a USA pro wrestling comic book called "The

Boston Knight", now in its 4th issue, if interested, contact me. Respectfully,  
Mr. S. Mitchell, Editor,  
THR Magazines. Box 293, Clawson, Mich.  
USA 48017 - 0293

I thought that your 2nd edition of Piledriver was a classic and I have put it in my book shelf next to my other favourite wrestling Mags., World Wrestling Federation Magazine and pro wrestling illustrated.

I think that this issue was better than the last one and I thoroughly enjoyed the articles about Hulk Hogan, Strange New World and I especially liked "Paying the Piper". I think that you should also include in your magazine maybe a recent match covered blow by blow and a competition of some sort.

SHANE MANZIE  
BALWYN, VICTORIA

Hi! Your Editorial in #2 reminded me of something I've been after for years - you mentioned that NZ gives the WWF a better run. Well, in the 1970's New Zealand had their own TV Wrestling series "ON THE MAT", and I'd sure love to get hold of Video Tapes of any of those programs....if you or any of your readers might be able to help, please. I'm able to take several Video formats, namely Beta/Cartridge/Reel-To-Reel (1/2" preferred)/U-matic/VCR Long Play (N1700)/VCR Standard Play (N1502)/VHS.

In fact, when I left the land of sheep more than 11 years ago, the last thing I watched on TV there the night before was ON THE MAT. Now I live just a couple of blocks away from your P.O. Box. (And used to work just over the road from mine). Regards,  
DOUG GRANT,  
P.O. Box 101,  
Collins St. Post Office, Melbourne, Victoria

I'm unfamiliar with "On the mat" but if any of our other readers can help Doug please write to him at his P.O. Box number printed above.

continued



Dear Sir, You should consider running an article or doing an interview with some of the local talent we have who work the club scene here in Sydney.

The shows have really picked up (as per local wrestler Ken Dunlops comments suggested in a recent Observer) here lately. Thanks

CRAIG NAPPER  
EBENEZER, NSW

Guys, 'PILEDRIIVER' goes from strength to strength. Issue #2 was even better than #1 (the larger format is very nice) with some fascinating articles and columns.

Leapin' Larry L's "You're All Talk" reminded me of the AWA interview in 1985 with then champion, Stan Hansen. The interview was being translated into Japanese and the guy translated everything, including Hansen spitting on the ground ("Haark-plui!"). That had me in stitches.

Wrestlers 'turning' have always been a major factor in keeping wrestling unpredictable, although I think it can be overdone or totally stuffed up. Just look at Bill Dundee and Paul Orndorff. These guys have lost all credibility with the fans with their constant jumps from face to heel to face again. And then you have Lex Luger as a heel, Kevin Sullivan as a face in 1988 and now you have Arn Anderson as a face (it won't work).

Your articles about Australian wrestling were very enjoyable and brought back some memories for me. Although my memories of "World Championship Wrestling" are vague, I know that my brothers and I were profoundly influenced at the time to play act as wrestlers on our spare bed. We even made up a song about our two favourite grapplers, King Curtis and Brute Bernard. The only live wrestling I've seen was when a Sydney promotion toured SA in late 1987. That night is memorable to me for three reasons - it was the worst night of wrestling I've ever seen (on TV or otherwise), I wrote a very scathing article about it for the newspaper I work for, and it, ironically, rekindled my interest in the sport. The card I saw was held at a local theatre in Renmark - normally used to show films and plays - not the ideal venue for wrestling. The show's promoter was frantic by the time the show was ready to begin, because only about 90 people had turned up to watch. He kept delaying the show's start until he realised no-one else was coming. There were five matches on the card, although most of the audience (including myself) left after the first half.

The Inoki article also brought back memories, particularly the Inoki-Ali match. I was old enough to remember watching the fight on TV and what I remember most about it was its mind-numbing tedium and the fact that the TV station ran only one ad, the same ad, between each round during the match. Aaarrrghh!

Onto other things. Lemster's list has inspired me to list "the 10 things I hate most about the WWF".

1. Hulk Hogan's posing before and after a match, his interviews, his wrestling, the inevitability of each match's result, etc.;
2. Brutus Beefcake's strutting, his interviews, etc (see above);
3. Damien (and Frankie and Matilda, if she was still there);
4. The WWF's interest in pushing brawlers and ignoring skill and talent like the Rockers, Blue Blazer, the Rougeaus, etc.;
5. The Red Rooster (and Honky Tonk Man, Akeem and the Bushwhackers);
6. The WWF's desire to keep matches short (preferably under 10 minutes);
7. Brother Love;
8. Vince McMahon's voice and laugh ("Oh ho..oh ho..oh ho ho!");
9. The WWF ignoring wrestlers' past histories (Harley Race's seven NWA titles, Widowmaker Barry Windham's past WWF history, Lanny Poffo being Randy Savage's brother, etc.);
10. The WWF's incessant pushing of merchandise in their magazine and on "Superstars Of Wrestling".

Well, I got that off my chest. Looking forward to issue #3. Regards,  
DAN LENNARD,  
LOXTON S.A.

Dear Laz 'Dr. D.', Enjoyed Piledriver #2 immensely. Leapin' Larry L's "You're All Talk" column had me in stitches. Hope it is a regular feature.

The magazines content was well balanced although the October-November update could have been more thorough. Future content could be 40% WWF, 40% NWA, 10% Japanese and 10% local.

Would it be possible to do an article on

masked wrestlers? Particularly Mil Mascaras, the Spoiler, Mr. Wrestling I + II, Masked Superstar and the Destroyers.

I have enclosed two pages of a list which appeared in the Book of Lists which might be beneficial. Any article about wrestling during this period.

Ever heard of a book "From Milo to Lenders" by Nat Fleischer published in 1936?

Would there be any videos featuring Akira Maeda's WWF? When will the Halloween Havoc be available? Regards, Merry Xmas!

RUSSELL TAWGETY  
ARMADALE, VICTORIA

Dear Dr. D., I have just read and enjoyed Piledriver #2. The articles I most enjoyed were those on Australian Wrestling (1970's), and articles/news on the WWF and profiles of their wrestlers. Wishing you all the best for issue 3.

Z. SABLJAK  
ST. KILDA, VICTORIA

Wrestling Info-Line, Dear Dr. D., I enjoyed each and every article within the magazine, with particular emphasis on Hulk Hogan's background. It surprised me how similar his and Brutus "The Barber" Beefcake's careers are, and it shows with their recent teaming up in "Summerslam '89".

I wish to also congratulate the extensive covering on the Info-Line, as it keeps myself and I'm sure many others up to date with "the latest in the wrestling world."

Once again, congratulations on the magazine and may it continue to thrive into the '90's.

MR. D.A. LYNDON  
COLLAROY PLATEAU, NSW

Sir, I am writing to you to find out more information on the wrestling action T.V. and Live action. I come from NSW and have been a devoted wrestling fan for a number of years but as you probably know Melbourne is the wrestling capital of Australia.

I watch the Superstar's Of Wrestling every Mon-Tues night on Ten. But obviously it is well behind the live action from the U.S.A. I have a number of questions. Do any of the wrestling federations overseas or local - e.g. WWF., N.W.A., A.W.A., W.W.C., World Class or Oceania - perform in NSW anymore? The last bout or card if you wish, I went to see was at Sydney Entertainment Centre Friday July 19th 1986. Main event was Corporal Kirschner Vs Nikolai Volkoff and "Cowboy" Bob Orton Vs George The Animal Steel.

If you know of any wrestling movies for sale please advise further too. I already have Summerslam '88 on video.

Do you have any info on the old Championship Wrestling in Melbourne, and who is the current Australian AM World Champion in that Federation? If I didn't buy the wrestling magazines I wouldn't know what was going on in the wrestling world. I understand Mario Milano lives in Melbourne. Does he still wrestle? Anyway, I can't think of anymore questions.

CHRIS STEMBAUER  
BLACKHEATH, NSW

Dear Chris, thanks for your letter. Unfortunately we can't help you with any of your questions. We've as much in the dark on these matters as you are. Perhaps some other reader may be able to help. As far as videos, check local video warehouses - several titles are out now and for sale to the public. Mario Milano is semi-retired but wrestles occasionally.

Dear Dr. D., Issue #1 was good but I gotta say Piledriver II was an improvement. The real Earth-1 size is better to look at and should help sales alot as it now looks like a REAL magazine. "You're All Talk" and similar items are great. "Hulk Hogan Sucks" is a mildly interesting case history with the depth I think should be devoted to every cover story-type wrestler profile. Unfortunately cover stories may wind up going mainly to WWF people for TV recognition value. Leapster's bit on turns was awesome. Wrestling Update should be much longer, it may duplicate the Line a bit but it's good to have something permanent. Myself being far too young to remember any Jack Little etc., stuff, the nostalgia necessary for full enjoyment of those bits is lacking. However, because I've modelled my

own thought patterns after the writing style of Dennis Twilight, I'd greatly enjoy a 300-page discussion of his on Hulk Hogan's range of finishing moves. Of course if I had my way the Lowbrow Duo would do everything!!

"The best matches of Our Lives" is great as are Dump's thighs. The lack of decent wrestling on Australian T.V. is precisely why you should give more coverage to the NWA, and Japanese wrestling.

Skull Murphy's an incredible looking individual. Predictable but heartfelt suggestion: how about official Piledriver singles and tag-team awards, compiled by yourself and the Piledriver Readers.

Bye from LEMSTER,  
ELSTERNWICK, VICTORIA

Dear Sir, Could you please supply me with the information on where I can purchase merchandise which are displayed in WWF magazine. Also if there are any catalogues on merchandise available in any federation, could you please send me them.

I would like to hear more results from the world class area which is now the USWA Federation and from the Stampede Areas.

Thank you for your help and I am hoping to hear from you soon. Yours sincerely,

BRIAN ADAMS,  
GUILDFORD, NSW

Dear Brian, keep listening to the Telephone Wrestling Lines (see ad on the inside front cover) for USWA updates. For WWF merchandise it's best you write to them directly...don't send any money yet! Send a letter of enquiry first. Their address is - WWF Merchandise Dept., P.O. Box 6789, Stamford, CT 06904, U.S.A.

Dear Sir, I recently received in the mail my copy of PILEDRIIVER No.2 and devoured its contents with great interest. Congratulations on producing such an interesting wrestling magazine with a humorous byline throughout!

As a wrestling fan/observer since my teen years in the lat 60's (God, how time flies in the Lumberjack Match of Life), I have and continue to receive lots of pleasure from following the mat sport, especially in the U.S.A. When I got married last year, I think my wife believes that I have had too many close encounters with a turnbuckle to maintain such a long-standing interest in this special form of what I call "sports entertainment."

It would be interesting to hear of any likely public wrestling here in Sydney by the WWF or the NWA. Local fans are obviously starved of live matches from these organisations, but of course, economics is economics.

During my honeymoon in Hawaii last year, I managed to see an episode of Prime Time Wrestling. Roddy Piper's comments were hilarious - the Henny Youngman of Professional Wrestling?

Please accept my best wishes for continued growth of your readership and for PILEDRIIVER.

Yours faithfully,  
PHILIP LUCA  
LANE COVE, NSW

Dear Crew, Thoroughly enjoyed 'Piledriver 2', particularly the articles on wrestling in Australia.

Though an avid fan of wrestling since "Ringside with the Wrestlers" was shown on channel 9 in the early 60's, I prefer wrestling '80's ('90's) style. Back in the sixties, a wrestler would hold an armlock-headlock or leg lock for minutes at a time. These days, the action is a lot faster.

My first experience of live wrestling was at Sydney Stadium, third December, 1965. The card saw Ken Meddling draw with Tony Zorro, Roy Heffernan d. King Curtis (a "major upset"), Joe Hamilton and Tony Martin d. Carl Gotch and Ron Reed, Spiros Arion d. Red Bastien in a title defence. The main event, in a steel cage (the stadium's first such bout) saw blood drenched Mark Lewin damp the sleeper on Skull Murphy to gain the victory. Lewin became my hero that night. In years ahead, I would cheer him on against the likes of Killer Karl Kox, (a top feud), Prof. Tanaka (who blinded Lewin), King Curtis (later a face) and the Big John army. So whatever happened to Lewin? Last I heard, he was a heel with Kevin Sullivan in Texas.

My favourite heel was Killer Kowalski. His great feuds with Pepper Gomez, Dominic De



Nucci, Mario Milano and Don Lane were real edge of the seat stuff. He even became a face for a short time in 1966, to aid De Nucci against those dastardly Japanese, Mitsu Arakawa and Prof. Tanaka.

I have kept results of all T.V. and stadium/pavilion cards from 1964 to 1976. I still like to reminisce these good-old-days, for, as you rightly have said, you have to be there to feel the heat.

Incidentally, I believe Precious Peter S. is probably wrong when he reminisces about a match pitting De Nucci, Ellis and Billy Red Club (Cloud) against Kowalski - Arakawa and Bruiser

were rampaging together, July 1965, Ellis and Red Cloud were not in Australia. Possibly the feud he remembers was the one on 24th July, '65, when Spiros Arion, John Kostas, and De Nucci defeated Bruiser, Arakawa and Kowalski. Bob Bruiser, in his first stadium appearance, beat Billy Red Cloud on his last stadium appearance on 19th June, '65.

To conclude; some trivia. Roy Heffernan, "the man of 1000 holds," who promoted wrestling right through the '80's, made his return to Australia after quitting the Kangaroos on 24th July, '65, defeating a jobber. This same card, nearly 25 years ago, saw the debut of Australia's

current light heavyweight champion, Ken Medding. He weighed 12 stone, and had a 20 minute draw against Tony Zorro.

Looking forward to Piledriver 3. Yours faithfully,

STEVE CHARD  
LEUMEAH, NSW

Dr. D., Mark Lewin had some minor success in Texas, Florida and Hawaii as The Purple Haze. A couple of years ago he dropped out of wrestling altogether and went to live in Hawaii with King Curtis' family.

# SKULL MURPHY

## Future plot for a mini-series

Last issue's story on 60's wrestling by Precious Peter S and the infamous blood red back cover of Skull Murphy brought out a lot of nostalgic comments from our readers. Gary S (who, we might add, is no relation to Precious Pete) shares this little reminiscence with us, and if fact and fiction have become blurred in his mind, well - that's what wrestling is all about. Dr D.

My greatest boyhood heroes were restricted to the football field. Whenever anyone mentions the word 'backline' in any context the three magic names of Judson, Murray, Neale spring to mind. When Cowboy Neale rode the pack every Saturday and landed on some poor forward's head, even the grass needed replanting the Monday morning after. Whereas footballers were nominated hero status, wrestlers were revered, feared and if they were public enemies, were never patted on the back.

Precious Peter S was close to the mark in the last edition when he wrote about Skull Murphy's impact on Australia. I can never remember anyone speaking highly of the man. Or Brute Bernard for that matter. They were as hated as Collingwood and Carlton football sides were (you have to be a Saints fan to appreciate that).

And yet...word got around that Brute Bernard was a speech therapist (is that true Piledriver?) and that Skull Murphy actually had a mother. Brute Bernard was always given the benefit of the doubt because he couldn't speak intelligently in front of a camera. Maybe he really was brainwashed by his infamous tag-team partner who made his own excuses but never had any to convince even the most skeptical fan.

Skull Murphy could never have become a good guy because he would have had to grow hair. And that would have put paid to him, wouldn't it?

I must have been ten year's old when I actually had a grown up thought which went something like, it must be better being a bad guy than a good guy because no-one would bother you with anything more than the time of day. What made me come to that startling realization was one of the most unforgettable Saturday nights I can remember.

No, I didn't go to Festival Hall to watch the wrastlin. I went to the Southern Cross in town to go bowling. I played three games with my mates and we were in the middle of the fourth when someone yelled out that Skull Murphy was upstairs in the

hotel. The reaction was electric. Bowling balls were dropped as nearly fifty teenagers made a dash to the exit. I recall the manager screaming at everyone to take off their bowling shoes before they left the alley. Who gave a stuff about bloody bowling shoes when we wanted to see the Skull? We all ran towards the nearest set of stairs slipping in our bowling shoes and falling over one another in an effort to get into the lobby. One fella even took a bowling ball along.

Up in the lobby there was plenty of room but nobody seemed to be using it. People were content to line the walls or stand close to the doors or peep from around corners to gawk and stare at Melbourne's (nay, the world's) number one enemy.

I had seen a few things in life to make my hair stand on end. For one, I had been inside the St. Kilda dressing rooms often, but never quite often enough to get over the thickness of Cowboy Neale's neck. I don't know why but looking at it scared me. It was huge and wide as a semi - about two football's stood side by side longways up - and was covered in pimples. Every time I saw it I promised myself that I'd never take up football as a career. Being crushed into a pulp didn't worry me as much as the pimples did, but. That's why whenever anyone mentions backlines what I really think about is Judson, Murray, Neale's neck and pimples.

Looking at Skull Murphy in my bowling shoes made me think along the same lines. At first all I could stare at was that skull. I thought it looked polished and thick and reminded me of one of my backline heroes. Yes, Cowboy's neck and Skull Murphy's cranium seemed to become blurred into one image there in the lobby at the Southern Cross. Goodness gracious me it was terrifying. I nearly lost my passion for footy during those few minutes.

I was standing close to the lifts and never once believed I was in mortal danger. I thought I was safe. Let's face it,

we all kept distance from the man as if he emitted a dangerous ring of radio-activity. There wasn't a person in the crowd there brave enough to even say a mild hello to him. All I can remember hearing was an undercurrent of small (nervous) talk.

But then it happened. Someone behind me called out 'you're a has-been Murphy'. We all shrank in our talcum powdered socks thinking that the Skull would unleash his fury on the lobby and everyone present there. Then he looked towards the lifts from where the comment came and started making his way in my direction. Thus began the most frightening half a minutes of my young teenage life.

When I saw him heading in my direction I was convinced that he was going to eat my skinny bones into horse fertilizer. His eyes were bulging thick in the sockets and the light reflecting off his skull bounced off any shining objects in this path. His hands were at his sides but they were thick and stubby, powerful enough to rip pieces of steel to shreds, or to pummel 12 pound bowling balls to dust. I was shaking uncontrollably trying all the time to say, 'it wasn't me, sir. I promise'. I tried three or four times to say it but the words just wouldn't come out of my mouth and all the while he bore down upon me like a Mack, his front grill ready to blow me into oblivion.

The guy holding the bowling ball later told me that when the Skull was no more than five yards away from me I closed my eyes, lowered my head and held my groin with both hands. Then I heard his husky voice say relatively quietly,

"Get out of the way boy. You're blocking the button." he said.

I didn't seem to understand. I looked up to see him standing over me. Was this intimidation before the final kill? Somebody grabbed at my arm and pulled me aside. I fell backwards onto the lush Southern Cross carpet tripping the guy holding the bowling ball who came falling on top of me, the ball landing firmly in my midriff.

By the time I got my wind back Skull Murphy had long gone up to his room and the bowlers had made their way back to the alley. The guy with the bowling ball stayed on a while giving me a much needed hand. He helped me back into the bowling alley where, just as we were entering the door, I slipped again, this time onto my knees.

"That bastard," I grumbled bravely. "He's out to get us all!"

GARY S  
TOORAK, VICTORIA



**PILEDRIIVER PIN-UP**



**DAZZLER DUNLOP  
LOFTY PICKFORD  
AUSTRALASIAN TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS**

**See Ed Lock's  
HARBOUR CITY HAVOC  
inside this issue**