

• AUSTRALIAN PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING MAGAZINE

No. 4 June 1990

\$4

# Piledriver



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your votes on the  
Best and Worst  
of 1989

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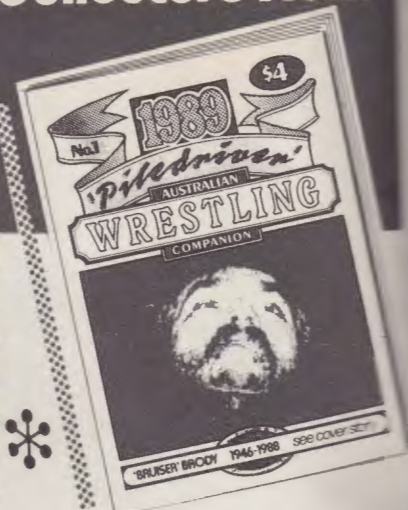
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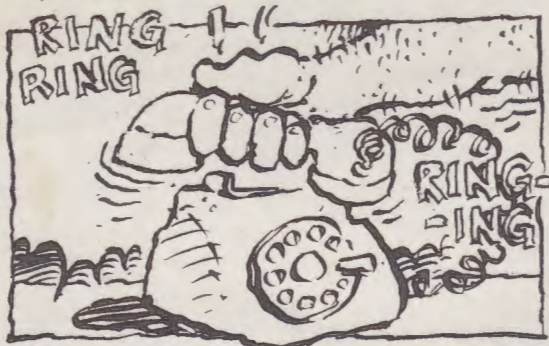
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## EDITORIAL

# Cut the choke..one..two....

I was going to open this one by screaming out the headline "Piledriver outsells Penthouse in Australia" because that's true at Beattie's Newsagency, the only above ground shop in our counter-culture network. However, I decided to give the hyperbole a rest, after all you could pick up any of the normal wrestling mags for that.

Or I could have told you that my bank teller here in Melbourne went to school with Canadian hotshot Chris Benoit who will someday be a superstar if stampede wrestling picks up again. But that wouldn't necessarily mean much to the vast majority of our readers.

So instead I'll give you a rundown on what's inside this issue. Matt Holdsworthy, peon of the pen and paste pot, has contributed our Ultimate Cover Story on the new WWF champion and also has snagged one more instalment in the ever popular series on Japanese wrestling - this time concentrating on Rikki Choshu.

The Danger Low Brow twin brothers of different mothers, Leapin' Larry L. and Dennis Twilight, weigh in with the second parts of their respective series on Best Matches ... and How to be a Wrestler. Fans of their Saturday morning radio show will know what to expect and as for the others, well you can't have everything. (Lobby your radio station for this show now).

Precious Peter S. dredges up memories that most of us have tried for years to suppress - the cold and clammy feel of those wrestling auditoriums all around the world where we were first initiated into the arcane mysteries of professional wrestling (Daddy, what are those men doing?)

Ed Lock proves there's still life in the old beast yet up Sydney way and Blackjack, who has become a real readers' favourite, donates to our humble mag his own version of Guernica, The Ultimate Ultimate Warrior drawing that will adorn locker rooms from Marrickville to Memphis.

You'll also find our jumbo sized readers letters pages and the results of the readers' poll which, I must admit, I was pleasantly surprised by.

But throughout this issue you'll be made aware of the everpresent problem of steroid usage and abuse in pro-wrestling ranks. I won't editorialise on this point any further as our feelings are self evident from the tones of the articles we've presented. If we've reached the point where wrestlers are sacrificing their health because we expect them all to be superhuman and monsters then the world of rollerball is here. We may as well go back to the Flintstones' version of wrestling where two cavemen simply beat each other over the head with clubs.

On a lighter and more positive note, there is talk that the WWF has sold its syndicated nights to some party in Australia, although no Channel has verified this. There's also talk that a couple of tours of overseas wrestlers are in the offing and with people like Paul Orndorff, Ken Patera, Tully Blanchard, Ivan and Nikita Koloff and Ricky Steamboat and dozens of others not wrestling for any major promotion, there's always the possibility Australian fans will see some decent action.

And finally, thanks to you readers for reading Piledriver. If you've enjoyed it, tell your friends to buy a copy. With printing costs being what they are we need more sales each issue to enable us to get bigger and better. After all, in case you hadn't noticed, apart from the shop listings on page 2, we do not allow advertisements.

Till next time, to paraphrase the immortal words of Superstar Billy Graham, "We are the magazine of the hour, the magazine with the power, too sweet to be sour". Till liquidation folks.

And I want a clean break now.

Dr. D

# grunts and groans

Dear Piledriver



I was lucky enough to see Wrestlemania VI live at the Skydome. I slept at the Skydome Hotel where all the WWF (including wrestlers) slept. Most of the wrestlers slept on the third and fourth floor. I spoke to nearly all the WWF wrestlers.

I said to the Ultimate Warrior - "You beat the legend (Hulk Hogan)". He replied "Yes".

I said to Curt Hennig - "What do you think of Hulk Hogan?" He replied "The greatest thing ever to hit professional wrestling".

More details in coming letters.

Yours sincerely,  
James Stanios

Dr. D: Thanks for the report, I'm sure this is how Jimmy Olsen started.

I have just bought issue two of Piledriver and boy, was it great! These days it's hard to find wrestling fans who remember those incredible matches from the sixties and early seventies. Sure, they all know about the WWF and all their stars, but I can't imagine what their reaction would be if they were to witness someone like Abdullah the Butcher or Skull Murphy in full swing.

Where do you guys get such detailed background info? The article on Antonio Inoki was extremely interesting and brings me to the question: could you possibly do more stories on boxers versus wrestlers over the past year. I'm aware of the Inoki-Ali fiasco but I've heard of many others involving Andre the Giant and Chuck Wepner; Ray Stevens and Archie Moore, etc. Anything you could come up with would be greatly appreciated as I find this type of match up (fiasco or not) quite fascinating. Also while I'm requesting things how about a rundown on the unbelievably brutal 'Peoples Army' vs 'The Generals Army' days with Big Bad John and his henchmen waging war on Mark Lewin and his boys?

Just one more favour to ask, please don't let this magazine end up as some shortlived project never to be seen again. Whatever it takes, do it! For those of us who know wrestling as being more than Hulk Hogan and the WWF hoopla, Piledriver is just what we need.

Thanks,  
Bill Webb, Sutherland, NSW

Thoroughly enjoyed Piledrivers 1-3 and looking forward to many more. This awards thing is a real winner as is the cover story each issue. Update is a definite must and the birthdates and names of wrestlers are very interesting. The format works really well now it's in a bigger size.

Just to take up more space, a few matches we'd like to see:

Rick Hunter vs The Gladiator

Danny Davis vs Mr. X

Andre the Giant vs The Giant Machine

Barry Windham vs The Widow Maker

Bad News Brown vs Dino Bravo in a gas chamber

Anyway blokes, keep up the good work and remember: (Andre voice); I know wun theng, an' that's watt the people gonner no too an' that's watt they gonner remumber, you are the ex-champion, 'OGAN'.

Waiting for Piledriver 4.

Mr. Arrogance, Jeffrey Thom  
Master of the Double Side-Headlock

PS: What happened to King Kong Bundy?

Dr. D: Still around - recently guested in an episode of Married ... With Children.

Why didn't Lemster (Grunts and Groans Piledriver 2) just give the cliché match. You know:-

## PRE-MATCH INTERVIEW WITH FACE (CHAMP)

"Yeah well I know all the Faceamaniacs are behind me and are keepin the 5 demands."

The trainin', sayin' the prayers, eatin' the steroids, ripping the T-Shirt and posing for 9½ hours. And Heel whatch ya gonna do when the 24 inch pythons-the largest arms

in the world, Faceamania and the Booker's imagination run wild on you?!!

## INTRO OF FACE/PRE-MATCH STUFF

Face's music starts "I am the promotion champion, The Booker says I can beat any man, I am the promotion champion, Can't be beatun, I'm the Booker's son. Crowd goes nuts. Face comes out door and points to ring. Crowd goes even more nuts. Face gets into ring rips pre-cut singlet off and throws it to crowd. Crowd goes even more nuts than the way they were before. If Heel weighs 150 pounds more than Face, Face acts out slam. If under 150 then counts to 3 on fingers. Crowd starts to lose it.

## FEW MINUTES BEFORE FINISH OF MATCH

Heel has thrown everything at Face. Face looks pretty crook, but every time Heel tries to pin Face, Face just manages to kick out or turn shoulder. The match will now end in one of two ways:-

1. Heel hits Face's head with elbow/head/knee. Face gets to knees, looks at Heel, opens eyes wide and blows. For some reason (we are not told why), Face's fish impersonation scares Heel and he hits Face again. Face gets up to one knee. Heel hits Face. Face gets to feet and walks around ring shaking while Heel keeps hitting. Crowd starts to totally lose it. Heel hits Face in head one more time. Face stands right up, looks calmly at Heel and shakes head and finger. Crowd have now totally lost it and 7 out of 10 could be declared insane and locked up. Face throws Heel to ropes, lifting leg and knocks Heel down. Face then goes to ropes and comes off with leg drop 1.2.3.
2. Heel gets Face in Sleeper hold. Has Face almost out of it. Ref lifts Face's arm, Arm drops. Ref lifts arm again. Arm drops again. Crowd screaming Face's name. Commentator says "If it drops again it's over". Ref lift arm, heavy suspense, ARM STAYS UP!! Face starts to shake, pushes way up. Heel usually tries head shot, Face either goes to fish impersonation or straight to leg-drop. 1.2.3. Face wins again.

## POST MATCH STUFF

If Heel has manager Face chases Him/Her into ring gives a few forearms and follows with an atomic drop. Face poses to his music and pretends he can't hear crowds screams. Crowd now completely GA-GA. Commentator saying something like "The greatest athlete in the world today. Faceamania rulz forever", other commentator saying "That was sickening. I might come out of retirement and take out this guy". He never does. Until next time this is so long from ring side.

From

Edgeworth NSW,

Weighing 287 pounds.....

The real master of the figure-four leg-lock ...Peter Banks

Dear Dr. D,

The Savage cover story in ish. 3 was superb as were the cover itself and Blackjack's rendition of him, reptilian neck tendons and all. With Muta, Sting, Steiner, Arn, vicious etc. out the N.W.A. seems headed for slim takings in the near future; can people sit through another summer of Flair Luger? What happened to Flair's multi-media megastar talk-show babyface push? Will N.W.A. bookers ever show more consistency than those jovial libs election fellows?

More of those nifty little Edison kinoscopic action picture sequences would be wonderful. Cover stories on Flair, the Steamer and the Funkster would be much appreciated.

Now for the most disgusting pector als in the Ring.

1. Dusty Rhodes (retire, puhleeze!)
2. The Ultimate Warrior (veiny salami with little sausage skin-knots).
3. Abdullah the Butcher
4. Bad News "My head would look normal upside down"  
Brown: the Santa Claus of Harlem
5. Kamala the Ugandan back-brace  
Make #4 bigger (if more shekel-consuming), greener and bye from.

Lemster: Arahhh Luuuhrve Yooouuu!!  
Elsternwick, Victoria

Here in Sydney, on the 21/04/90, a dance party was held at the Horden Pavillion. The dance party was titled, "Ratmania". And you can guess what the special attraction was: That's right, professional wrestling. Unfortunately, the main event was a jelly match between two men who had definitely had no business being inside the ring.

There were two other bouts displayed, one singles and one tag team bout. The singles bout was a light heavyweight contest between two rather young looking men. The action was rather slow for a light heavyweight bout, but the two performed their moves with accuracy.

The next bout featured the team of Ken Dunlop and Wayne Pickford. Ed Lock was right in his praise of this team as they are quite good. The champions went up against Mike Starr and his partner who I don't know. The bout had a lot more action than the other, with Dunlop and Pickford finally executing their Demolition Drop. But surprisingly, Starr reversed the cradle and pinned Dunlop. There was no announcement at the beginning of the bout whether it was for the title or not. What's your comment, Ed Lock?

About the jelly bout we will not speak of, but the crowd was attentive, if not informed. An added attraction was being able to be within one metre of the ring apron, with many people dancing to the music ringside. I wonder what the wrestlers thought of this, which must be a new experience for them.

One more thing: I was standing at ringside watching the action and who should I be standing next to, but the infamous Skull Murphy. After exchanging comments about the show, I remarked that I had seen a picture of him on the back of Piledriver No. 2.

He asked, "Australian magazine is it"? I replied yes. He then became quite angry and shouted, "That'd be right, why didn't anyone tell me about it? Why am I always the last bloody one to know!"

He obviously wasn't angry at me, but you guys at Piledriver might like to send a copy along to Skull. Or else.....

It was interesting seeing the Australian wrestling, but the memory I'll have from that night will be Skull Murphy turning to me and saying "I looove suplexes!"

Regards,

David Lee, Rydalmere, NSW

PS: I was told by a friend of mine that Skull Murphy is dead. Is this true? Do we have an imposter in our midst?

Dr. D: Dave, I don't know how to break this to you... So I'll be brutal. Skull died in 1970, apparently a suicide. (But then again, if Jim Morrison's alive in Paris, maybe Skull is in NSW).

Dear Piledriver,

I have been a fan for 2 years now following the WWF for most of that time but being aware of the other promotions such as the NWA and AWA etc. through magazines, namely pro-wrestling illustrated and Sky Channel. The appearance of Piledriver last October/November was like a breath of fresh air after sitting in a car with a hose leading to the front seat with all the windows up for about as long as a WWF Andre vs Warrior Match! I have copies of both Piledriver #1 and Piledriver #3 and would be eager to know if there would be any chance of getting a copy of Piledriver #2 at all anywhere in Melbourne. Personally I'd be willing to pay up to \$10-\$15 for a copy as such and would like to hear from anyone who has a copy - say a spare one in good knick.

I have actually seen a live wrestling card but that was back in 1979-80 in Melbourne before the rasslin' bug caught me but now I have a burning passion for the sport and since Channel 10 no longer screens the Vince McMahon Jr. wrestling show I have relied heavily on sources such as your magazine which I believe is much more accessible and readable than other overseas mags, particularly in its new A4 format a highlight of which is the artwork.

I have written to you not only to commend you on your publication but also to gain some information about whether or not it is possible to buy WWF merchandise or NWA merchandise in Melbourne or Sydney. If you know of any such outlets that stock such merchandise in either city then I would appreciate it if you could let me know. All the best with your publication and see you at the 'Pat'.

Yours wrestling

Thomas Vida Jr., a.k.a. the Master Blaster, Victoria.  
Dr. D: As far as I'm aware no wrestling merchandise is available in any part of Australia. Could be just the thing for an aspiring entrepreneur.

I have just finished reading Piledriver Number 3 and I must say I was impressed. I say that your magazine is one of few that you come across that gives you honest journalism.

I particularly liked your cover story on Randy Savage, the how to be a wrestler article, the pro wrestlers real names and the wrestling update.

I was very saddened by the news that "Superstars of Wrestling" has been axed and causing us to be without any wrestling on television and events such as "Wrestle Mania", "Summer Slam", etc.

I always used to stay up for wrestling on T.V. even though my friends called me crazy. I would like to ask you the Piledriver magazine and the wrestling information line if you could possibly be some type of sponsor to get wrestling back on television. If not could you please keep on asking all your readers and listeners to write to channel ten and reverse this harsh decision that has been made.

Dr. D.: People, are you listening?

To conclude I must say that I couldn't agree with you more when you referred to Trump Plaza as a morgue at "Wrestle Mania IV". If they keep that up they'll never match the success of "Wrestle Mania III" at the Pontiac Silver Dome.

Thanks and keep up the good work.

Leo Pierroti  
Cabramatta, NSW

I have just finished reading PILEDRIVER No. 3 and think the cover story on the Macho Man was great. Now, I can't wait to read the next issue with the cover story on the Ultimate Lunatic. It broke my heart to hear on the Wrestling Info Line how a man of no class like the Warrior could beat a living legend like the charismatic Hulk Hogan. I've now lost all my faith in Vince McMahon and was wondering why Ted Turner doesn't get smart and sell the T.V. contract of the N.W.A. to an Australian television station. Now that no WWF is shown on T.V. anymore, the Australian public can have more of a liking for the N.W.A. which could set them up for an Australian tour which undoubtedly would be a tremendous success.

Yours sincerely  
Steven Zammit, Newport Victoria.

To Piledriver, the only true wrestling magazine to the Leapster, Proff. D.T., Laz Dr. D. and all others.

However awesome and original "Piledriver" may be, you still have a long way to go. Okay, I am an impudent geijig who knows little of the entire wrestling scene, and even less about the gut-wrenching complexities of compiling and selling a wrestling magazine. Regardless of this, I speak from the point of view of a true wrestling fan, who cares little for gimmicks, angles, managers and bums like Hogan, Beefcake, Ultimate Warrior, Duggan and many others.

Therefore, I heartily welcome this magazine because it comments on wrestling for what it is, contrived entertainment. This means that truly hard working wrestlers are acknowledged for their skills and athletic abilities rather than pathetically booked feuds and gimmicks. Again, I reiterate that the magazine is awesome. With Channel 10 dropping the only form of wrestling on mass media, Piledriver itself will become an ultra-necessary blood transfusion to a person with a cut jugular vein; myself, your devoted reader.

Again, I repeat that technically speaking, I have too little knowledge or experience in these areas to have the right to criticise this biblical, holy scripture, koran type magazine. But, as I am buying it, I have the right to at least advise some changes. First of all, being bone ignorant of the wrestling in Australia during the '60's and '70's and having gone to a match where Spiros Arion and Andre the Giant took on what seemed like a thousand impertinent wrestlers (they fought the law and the law won), but also having been too young to remember it, I care very little about the wrestling Australian-style, pre-'80's that you are collectively thrusting down our throats. I don't care if it proves that Australia has a wrestling past, lose it please, I beseech thee.

Secondly, it is not enough, not by a long shot or a nightmarish fantasy. I'll admit that compiling a magazine, writing up each article editing, collating etc. must be a Herculean bitch of a task, but it is not enough. I am not saying that there isn't value for money, (even though \$4

seems pretty stiff for a black and white 27 page magazine, forgive me, I know I blaspheme), but just that as hardcore fans (not in the pornographic sense) we need more! I am confident that, as can be evidenced by the gradual, almost magical lengthening of the magazine, as the literary confidence of the hallowed, almost god-like writers increases in this type of format, so too will the magazine's size, style and content increase.

Forgive me if I slip into my rather like Kind teacher persona, but to put it as clearly as I can, do not fear making any changes to the magazine. Since you are aimed at and bought by a hardcore audience, you should simply assume that a large portion of that market is unerringly doggingly loyal. As a totally devoted Danger: Low Brow Worshipper, and wrestling follower, I will buy this magazine regardless of the most drastic and horrific changes you may perform on this magazine, for it is your baby, and you may do with it what you like. Even if no changes are made, I will still buy it, except I will have a bitter, hurt look in my eyes as I shake my head and mutter as I hand my cash over the minotaur counter.

The content (except for any references to Australian wrestling) is thoroughly awesome and not under question. The writing is also excellent, leaving the reader feeling exhausted, but enlightened and in the mood for a cigarette whilst asking "was it as good for you as it was for me?" If you decide to make changes to this magazine "Piledriver" can they aspire to the perfection and excellence of execution personified by my two favourite wrestlers, "Mr. Perfect" Curt Hennig and Bret "Hitman" Hart. I will be left yelling, "Now you are going to see a perfect magazine", to the crowds.

Your totally devoted worshipper and slave until time's end.

Andrew "What, no Cravy".

Dr. D: You know, ..... Danger Low Brow has an awful lot to answer for. Mr. No Gravy, in the immortal words of Lesley Gore when she bought Piledriver - "It's their magazine and they'll write what they want to". Seriously though, there are lots of fans who remember the 60's and 70's scene and they salivate over the nostalgic pieces. Let's humour them for a little while anyway.

Firstly I'd like to say that your wrestling magazine is the most informative and factual wrestling mag on the market today. It doesn't go on with any of the "googah" that you find in other wrestling magazines.

Also, I'd like to congratulate you on the obvious success of the wrestling info line. It was about time someone decided to keep the wrestling fans of Australia informed with some decent news.

It's unpleasant to hear that Channel 10 in Sydney will be scraping Superstars of Wrestling. Are they also scraping wrestling specials such as Wrestlemania 6? What a shame if they are. Surely your magazine will be able to sway the "powers that be" at the Channel 10 production studio. If 10's ratings are not so good at the moment just imagine how bad they will be if they eliminate wrestling entirely. Fortunately wide world of sports on Channel 9 still shows a decent wrestle now and then.

I would love to hear from any Paul Orndorff, Roddy Piper and Jesse Ventura fans. All these wrestlers were great and had charisma, unlike Hulk Hogan and the Ultimate Warriors steroid created "maniac frenzies". I'm sure they have some charisma, but don't you think they over do it? If anyone out there has some quality VHS or BETA footage of Orndorff, Piper and Ventura please write to me. I'd like to buy and/or swap videos.

When is the WWF finally coming to Australia? Correct me if I'm wrong but it's been at least 2 years since the previous tour. Come on WWF and Channel 10, wake up or you are going to lose your wrestling fans forever!

Yours sincerely  
Greg Tingle

P.O. Box 347, Newport N.S.W. 2106

PILEDRIIVER stomps throats, rakes eyes and pulls hair! Those other wanna be never were geeko magazines are quite simply (Like Hulk) inferior 'typical American' rags. Textually Piledriver has all the flair of Ric. It is refreshingly honest, humorous (Did you 'borrow' from Wrestling Eye's Phantom of the ring?), and above all Australian. The writer's reminiscing is fun, even though I only remember the last few years of WCW. Black Jack's

illustrations are outstanding in comparison to the Yankee's stuff and aid a great deal visually, 'cause your bromides (like Hulk) suck! But you can get away with it....for now.

Possible improvements might be a video production appraisal of events, spotlight on underexposed real talent, and I'd be impressed if you did an article on wrestling collectibles eg. dolls, books, masks etc.

If you want to be a face take a squiz at the only good U.S. mag 'Superstar Wrestlers Reporter', a uniquely different magazine with some magnificent ideas, hint, hint.

Also, the Wrestling Mayhem nights are good despite the fact they're on a Tuesday and go longer than patrons hang around. Start at 7.30 people work you know! The other thing is that video screen. Can somebody tell the Prince Pat to update it, or at least clean it! The things absolutely filthy, and I'm sure I can see somebody's named scrawled on it at top centre. When was the video projector last adjusted anyway. And for Christ's sake stop the bad music video festival we get, and play some wrestlin' interviews or music videos else I'll do a tap dance on your head and make you like it! Whoooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!

So long and good luck you tag team champs of magazines.

Legend Killer

Altona, Victoria.

Dr. D: You know what's scrawled there? "Genius loves Perfie", I swear someone at the Prince Pat will pay for this.

Just read Piledriver 3. I nearly wet myself when I saw Savage on the cover. It was a good article and lets hope he becomes champion again. How about a like story on the Road Warriors?

Regards

Russell Tangey, Armadale Victoria.

Dear Laz,

Thanks for the copy of Piledriver. Look for a nice plug in issue 4. Nice job you're doing! Looking forward to hearing from you.

Evan Ginzburg

Dr. D: Evan Ginzburg publishes a newsletter called Wrestling Then & Now, a nostalgic look at wrestling and its fans, with an emphasis on the latter. Copies are available from P.O. Box 471 Oakland Gardens Station, Flushing, New York 11364 USA at \$2.25 per issue for overseas readers.

I just read your third issue of PILEDRIIVER. Superb, mate. The fanzine just keeps on getting better. The articles were great, particularly the ones on World Championship Wrestling. I watched the BIG TIME WRESTLING videotape and it was great to see guys like Skull Murphy and Spiros Arion in action. If you or any of your readers have tapes of old NWA, AWA (pre-1986), mid-south/UWF or Memphis wrestling for sale, could they drop me a line. I'd be interested to hear from them. I recently read an old PENTHOUSE article about the Von Erichs (which quoted Dave Meltzer), and it really made my blood boil to see how Fritz has really exploited his sons. Maybe you guys might be interested in doing a story on them some day for a future issue. By the way, I hope Lou Thesz's wrestling tour to Australia goes ahead in June. I'd travel half way across Australia to see guys like Tim Horner, Brad Armstrong and Ivan Koloff in action. You know with a guy like Thesz at the helm, that the fans would be guaranteed an action-packed card.

Anyway keep up the great work. I look forward to issue four.

Regards

Dan Lennard

33 Wodonga Avenue, Loxton, S.A., 5333

I have just finished reading your 2nd and 3rd issues and would like to congratulate you for both Piledriver and the Wrestling Information Line. It's just a pity that we can't get TV coverage of the NWA in Australia. I also think it's only a matter of time before Channel 10 cancel the Tuesday night SUPERSTARS OF WRESTLING show. (Dr. D: Little did you know how prophetic you were).

I was also disappointed to read that Virgin video are stopping their Wrestling Videos after the Royal Rumble 1990. By the way for any readers out there looking for some wrestling videos, look out for PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING FROM

Robert Goldman, a researcher in sports medicine and author of *Death in the Locker Room* polled nearly 200 professional sportsmen asking them.

"If I had a magic drug so fantastic it would let you win every event you entered, but would kill you after five years - would you take it?"

To which over 50 per cent of those polled replied in the affirmative.

The *Underground Steroid Handbook for Men and Women*, produced by a group of Californian bodybuilders had this to say on Human Growth Hormone, a popular steroid.

"Now, this is great stuff! This is the only drug that can remedy bad genetics, as it will make anybody grow. People who use it can expect to gain 30 to 40 pounds of muscle in 10 weeks if they can eat about 10,000 calories per day. A few side effects can occur, however. It may elongate your chin, feet and hands. Diabetes in teenagers is possible with it. We have heard of a powerlifter getting a heart attack on Human Growth Hormone. It is the biggest gamble that an athlete can take as the side effects are irreversible. Even with all that, we LOVE the stuff".

This is not a story about a wrestler. This is a story about a man who represents everything wrong in wrestling today. Officially he's from "parts unknown", his talents also remain unknown and he achieved his body through the wonders of chemicals unknown. This story is about a man who I think ought to be called 'The Ultimate Disgrace'.

The Ultimate Warrior entered the WWF with a whimper rather than a bang in late 1987. As early WWF publicity put it, "his face daubed with war paint, eyes fiery, The Ultimate Warrior is a newcomer who is quickly proving that his awesome muscles and agile movements make him worthy of notice in the WWF. Watch for him to score some big victories".

It sounds impressive but there was no evidence to back up the promises. His early matches were openers against WWF jobbers, designed to give the fans a quick and exhilarating buzz at the start of a card. His matches lacked technique and depth, and showed no sign that The Ultimate Warrior could produce the goods in full-on competition.

Yet almost immediately the money-paying customers took a liking to him! Having seen him once they wanted more. Not unlike being unable to stop at eating one salted peanut. The Ultimate Warrior was becoming addictive.

# COVER STORY

Fans demanded more appearances to experience further buzzes.

WWF head Vince McMahon Jr. knew he was on to something with the way the fans were popping, but he wasn't absolutely sure how he should push him. The Ultimate Warrior was something different. Facial paint, multi coloured war pendants dangling from his arms and legs, and able to make a live crowd erupt on sight. He wasn't a wrestler with a gimmick, but a wrestler as a gimmick. As one observer succinctly put it, it's a matter of the frosting mattering more than the cake.

To keep the ball rolling the Ultimate Warrior had his matches promoted to middle of the card against wrestlers with some name recognition and reputation, who could carry the Warrior through a match and sell his few simple moves.

First was Hercules, the WWF "strongman" wrestler who

continued



JAPAN VOLUMES 1-4 (excellent Bruiser Brody tape), LORDS OF THE RING and a new one imported from N.Z. called AMERICAN WRESTLING VOLUME 1 which is really old IWF TV shows the first one features Lou Thez and Lucious Larry Heineme and a very young Dino Bravo (it has a picture of Lex Luger on the front cover, although he isn't in it).

There are also some great new wrestling video games hitting the arcades - WWF Superstars of Wrestling - Average, good graphics but pretty hard to pin your opponent. SEGA Wrestling War - pretty poor graphics and limited moves allowed, Exciting Hour - Farily easy to master once you've had a few games and plenty of moves and a new one called Wrestling Champion with excellent graphics and heaps of moves both in and out of the ring (eg. Boston Crab, small package, suplex, knee drop etc).

Anyway, thanks again for your excellent magazine and I look forward to reading the next issue.

Regards,  
Darren Cole, Winston Hills, NSW

Saw your organisation in one of the many wrestling magazines on the market. I thought I would write you a note about our wrestling promotion in Southern California.

The promotion American Independent Wrestling Alliance, Inc. (A.I.W.A.) was formed on January 1, 1990 after months of preparation by Ed Ahrens, Alejandro Fregoso and Steven

Bellandir.

The promotion to date, has run seven shows - five at Rock Around The Clock Club in Montclair, one at Club Metro in Riverside and one big show at the Indio Fairgrounds. The Indio Show headlined with Wendi Richter, Hillbilly Cousin Luke and Mary "Duchess of Discipline" - a member of the LPWA Federation.

We have employed twenty-eight wrestlers during the first two months of this year. Wrestlers of note include:-

1. Rod Price - former San Diego Charger football player;
2. Country Boy Calhoun - a 420 pounder;
3. WWF performers - Billy Anderson, Louie Spicolli, Riki Ataki and Stephan DeLeon;
4. LPWA - Flame and Mary "Duchess of Discipline"
5. Samoan Bulldog a former Trans Asiastic Heavyweight Champ
6. The Mercenaries;

Feel free to drop us a line  
A.I.W.A.

P.O. Box 6994  
Los Angeles, Calif. 90022

Feel free to pass on this information to any promoters in your area.

Sincerely  
Ed Ahrens

Dr. D: No sooner said than done. I'm a sucker for gratuitous publicity.

wears a chain about his neck like costume jewellery. In their match-up the Ultimate Warrior proved his mighty strength by snapping Hercules' chain in two with his bare hands. The first match ended a dust-up in the aisle, and the rivalry led to them settling their differences at WRESTLEMANIA IV.

Having proved his superiority over Hercules, the Warrior's next major "challenge" was against the Honky Tonk Man who was defending his Intercontinental Champion title at SUMMERSLAM '88 (29 August, 1988). Anyone who blinked would have missed the match. Honky Tonk hadn't even removed his shirt before the Ultimate Warrior bounded into the ring, did six simple moves and then pinned the flabbergasted Honky Tonk Man for the 3 count. The Warrior was awarded the belt to tumultuous applause after less than one minutes work!

The Warrior next faced and beat the masked Super Ninja, but this was only a single bout interlude before a feud was developed with Ravishing Rick Rude.

In the build-up the Ultimate Warrior and Rude competed in a bodybuilder style posedown on the WWF's ROYAL RUMBLE, letting the fans decide with their applause who had the best body. Can you guess who won?

The Ultimate Warrior, with his humungous physique, massive babyface appeal and tremendous response for just being there easily beat the egotistical heel Rude, who demonstrated his disappointment by turning on the unprepared Warrior and pounding him into unconsciousness. This set up the angle for a future confrontation.

The match came at WRESTLEMANIA V on, 2nd April, 1989 as a title defence for the Ultimate Warrior. After being knocked senseless by the Warrior with several hurried moves Rude seemed destined to lose when his manager, Heenan grabbed The Ultimate Warrior's left leg from under the ropes and felled him. Momentarily disoriented, Rude was able to lurch on top of The Warrior to receive the 3 count and steal the Intercontinental Championship Title and belt.

In interviews The Ultimate Warrior claims he comes from "parts unknown", but he does have a pro background. It's just not much to talk about, that's all. The Ultimate Warrior's real name is James (Jim to his friends) Hellwig, aged 31, standing 210cm (6'2½") tall and weighing in at

115kg (285lb). His hometown is Atlanta, Georgia. It was only 4 years ago that Jim turned professional, but with little interest in wrestling before then.

Hellwig was a keen bodybuilder, and won several competitions. To pay for his training, which he did mostly at night, he worked as a sandwich-board man strolling the streets of Atlanta carrying his sandwich-board advertising anything from coffee shops to orthopaedic shoes. Spotted because of his huge size (he often only wore bathers whilst working), Hellwig was trained by Red Bastien, who has trained many successful wrestlers, and debuted in 1985 in Memphis with the Mid South Sports promotion after he'd only received 3 weeks training! Mid South rushed him into action. They wanted him for his appearance because monster builds had become the "in" wrestling attraction, and his work standard was of secondary importance. The catch is without the proper grounding his work standard is unlikely to ever progress much further than it stands now.

Times were tough at Mid South Sports which changed its name to the Universal Wrestling Federation in 1986. By late 1987 the UWF had folded when UWF boss Cowboy Bill Watts sold it to Jim Crockett Promotions and several wrestlers joined the WWF including Ted DiBiase (transformed into the Million Dollar Man), "Hacksaw" Jim Duggan, and eventually Jim Hellwig. Hellwig had worked under his real name, as part of Power Team USA and Freedom Fighters, and as the Dingo Warrior (it's true!), but he had also worked as Blade Runner Rock, part of the UWF Blade Runner tag team with Sting (see later).

The WWF unleashed Hellwig as The Ultimate Warrior. An interesting historical footnote. There had been another wrestler who had fought under that name before (which everyone who read Dr. D's Wrestling Update last month would already know). When Bad News Brown (Allen Coage) wrestled in Florida as Bad News Allen he was billed as The Ultimate Warrior. At this time Hellwig was still working in Texas as The Dingo Warrior.

It's interesting, as a way of keeping The Ultimate Warriors' true talents in perspective, to make a comparison between him and Ted DiBiase. DiBiase has been

# SUPERSTAR BILLY GRAHAM

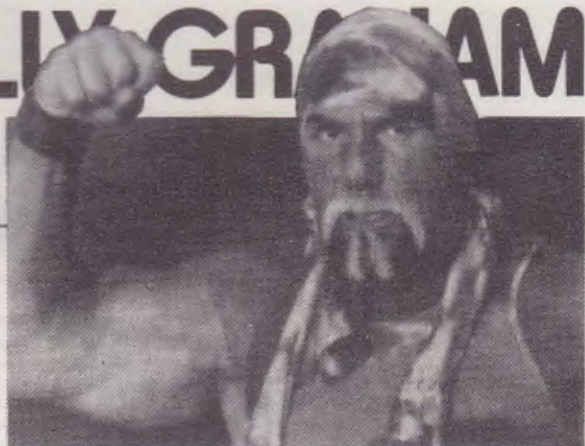
## - A Reflection

Superstar Billy Graham was one of the first massively muscled men to hit the mat in a big way. By his own admission he was using steroids as early as the mid-sixties and when he entered the wrestling world in 1969 he became an instant smash creating heat virtually on his looks alone - a phenomenon predating Hulk Hogan by 10 years.

Graham, real name Wayne Coleman, is best known for his long running stint as heel world champion for the World Wrestling Federation. On 30 April 1977 he defeated Bruno Sammartino for the title ending the living legend's second stint as champion. Graham held it until 20 February 1978, losing the title to the clean cut Bob Backlund in controversial circumstances as Graham's foot was on the ropes for the crucial 3 count.

The WWF of those days was totally different to the Fed we know today. There used to be plenty of gore and bloody gimmicks like Sicilian stretcher matches and Alley fights that would pack the East Coast arenas week in week out. And Graham, with his larger than life physique was as appropriate a champion for those ambivalent times as broken dishes are at a Greek wedding.

Following his loss to Backlund, Graham's career floundered and in 1979 he underwent a series of serious operations for steroid related problems. Graham made a couple of brief come backs in the early 1980's first in the WWF and later the NWA under Jim Crockett. Wrestling magazines, in the periods that he was away from the ring, gave life to the rumours that he'd died



Billy Graham

from cancer.

Following yet another extended hiatus from the ring, Graham returned in late 1986 to the WWF but was hampered by injuries before his feud with the Natural Butch Reed could get going. Graham opted instead to play the part of Don Muraco's mentor and, when Vince McMahon allowed it, colour commentator. Graham proved to be no natural behind the microphone and was quickly blown out of the action in that respect also.

Interestingly enough the best colour commentator in the business today, Jesse Ventura, modelled himself almost wholesale on the Superstar, from the hip talk to the sculptured physique to the tie-dyed clothes to the inability to work. In Ventura's case, the pupil had transcended the teacher.

We pick up the story now with an article from Steve Beverly's MATWATCH newsletter, one of the finest American wrestling related publications. (MATWATCH subscriptions are available from Steve Beverly by writing to him at 213 Pine Hills Avenue, Auburn, Alabama 36830 USA).



wrestling professionally for 17 years, but his physique looks unimpressive by today's standards. DiBiase is in reality very well conditioned. The irony is his "unimpressive" appearance is natural conditioning from heavy and regular working out so that he has tremendous stamina and the ability to wrestle hard and long without suffering early exhaustion.

The new generation of impressive looking but steroid produced youngsters like The Ultimate Warrior can last for only a short time in the ring. The Warrior's "trademark" short works reveal his lack of conditioning. A short burst of action and he's out of energy, huffing and puffing and perspiring heavily.

DiBiase on the other hand is very popular in Japan where the fans are had to please and demand long, furious matches and not just gimmicks. He has toured there for many years and always goes over big with the audiences. It's unlikely The Ultimate Warrior will ever be invited to visit Japan outside of a WWF worked match. But that's not all. There is another interesting comparison which can be made between the Warrior and his career and the career of Sting ... They were both bodybuilding and selected at the same time to become wrestlers! Neither had much training before starting out as a babyface duo wrestling under their real names (Sting's real name is Steve Borden) as Power Team USA to feud with The Road Warriors.

About a month later they were turned, had their faces painted and wrestled as The Blade Runners. Not long afterwards they left Memphis to join Bill Watt's UWF but

split up soon after. Watts had become adamant that the team give up the steroids, lose weight and instead train properly in the gym to achieve legitimate strength and also practice their wrestling to improve their work.

Steve Borden (then known as Blade Runner Sting), after splitting up with Hellwig, remained with the UWF and got stuck in to the long haul of cleaning his body of drugs and changing his wrestling training routine to increase his talent.

Hellwig (known then as Blade Runner Rock), on the other hand, quit the UWF and joined World Class to wrestle as the Dingo Warrior, then finally found himself at the WWF with a new identity - The Ultimate Warrior.

Their achievements are startling by comparison, two careers closely connected yet so vastly different. And we've still to see how both their stories finish. Only time will tell.

Anyway, Sting worked his way up the ladder at Watt's UWF starting at the bottom and finishing at the top, working main events after the UWF was taken over by Jim Crockett, then moving to Crockett's NWA where he still enjoys the well deserved status of a champion. He's in top physical condition, an excellent worker and able to create huge heat because of his enormous popularity.

The Ultimate Warrior has been nicknamed unkindly but (sadly) quite accurately The Anabolic Warrior. It's sad because there's some truth to the nickname. And it's sad because of the dangerous consequences the use of anabolic steroids can have to a person's health.

Athletes have always quested for easier ways to accomplish being faster, stronger and bigger. Medical science has found easier ways to achieve those goals and athletes have adopted these discoveries ignoring possible side-effects because winning is everything.

Steroids are chemical substances which mimic the natural male sex hormones. Originally designed for patients to accelerate recovery, steroids can be divided into two main categories. Androgenic - used for recuperation after hard consistent training, and Anabolic - which promote tissue growth and repair. Both promote muscle growth but there are many side-effects and some

## SUPERSTAR GRAHAM: "I THREW IT ALL AWAY"

By Steve Beverley.

Nearly 21 million viewers were tuned to NBC Friday night before last to see the 1990 version of Wrestling in Wonderland. But in Los Angeles hospital lay a former standardbearer of the World Wrestling Federation in a mood of drastic counterpoint to the frenzy in Detroit.

Superstar Billy Graham, who carried the WWF of the mid-'70's on his shoulders, was telling KNBC sportscaster Fred Rogan a story the Vince McMahon's of the world avoid like the tornado which smashed my home two weeks ago. Graham apparently called Rogan the afternoon of THE MAIN EVENT, prepared to relate the tale of a cripple who destroyed his career and lifestyle in a sea of steroids. Rogan's interview aired on KNBC's 11 p.m. newscast that evening.

Graham is paying at least his seventh visit to a hospital for reconstructive surgery, this time having an ankle rebuilt. The former WWF champ blames it all on steroids. "I've had friends inject me in the locker room", Graham told Rogan. "I've injected other people. And the joke in the WWF locker room is that if you tested positive for steroids, you were fined. And if you didn't test positive for steroids, you were fined".

In Graham's current situation, he suffers from side effects from the "juice" which have caused disintegration of bone joints. "I read all the brochures", said Graham. "But we just shied that off. We had no clue it would go to your bone joints and literally destroy you". Graham used to boast of his "23 inch pythons" during his WWF and NWA days. "I lay in the hospital literally by myself at 3 o'clock in the morning in constant pain. I've got seven pins in my ankle and a reconstructed hip. I've done it to myself".

Growing sanguine, Graham reflected back on his glory days. "I was the champion of the World Wrestling Federation. The most colorful man in the sport and I threw it out the window. It's not worth it, man, when you're lying in a hospital cut open from end to end and you're on morphine and demoral because of the pain and you know you'll never walk like a normal man again".

In his own introspection, Graham doesn't consider his unsuccessful twilight career as a color commentator for the WWF, the last effort coming at SUMMER SLAM '88, one of the most

critically panned broadcasting efforts of the decade. Instead, he's interested in preaching the truth about drug use in the industry and attempting to potentially save the lives of young people.

"Ninety percent of pro wrestlers use steroids", said Graham, a figure I've had scoffed at and outright confirmed by several industry insiders in the last week. "The WWF tests for cocaine but not steroids". Ironically, Graham's comments came in the same week World Championship Wrestling was scheduled to begin drug testing for its entire company (including announcers and office personnel). The first test was announced but future ones are scheduled to be random examinations. MATWATCH was not able to determine if WCW will look for steroids.

"When I get out of here, I want to speak to high schools and colleges on the evils of steroids", said Graham. "Young people look at athletes like us and they think if they can it, why shouldn't I. All you have to do is look at me and ask yourself if this is the way you want to wind up".

All you have to do is see Graham in that bed to remind yourself that non, absolutely none of today's wrestling organisations are doing more than hit and miss attempts at striking back against drug abuse. If Graham's percentages are correct, public service messages may be wrought with ambiguity. But with as many kids and teens as watch today's TV wrestling, promotions have long since run out of excuses. We'll make the challenge from here: for every 30 minutes a wrestling show is on the air, its producing company should include a minimum of a 30 second anti drug message. No bull, no in character stuff. Just straight talk same as many of the CBS stars offer in prime time spots.

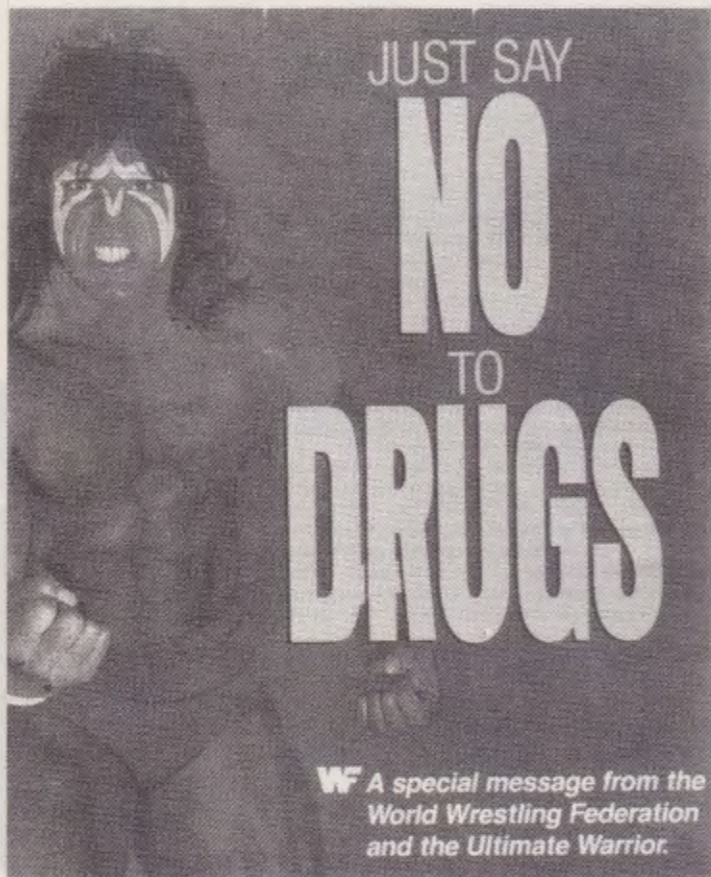
And if testing doesn't include checks for steroids then it's no better than the ineffective program the National Football League has offered, much of which has led to the recent resignation of Dr. Forrest Tennant as the NFL's drug adviser.

The sad part is we'll probably see many more tales like Billy Graham's told in the next few years. The death of Rick McGraw in 1985 and reported health problems of former Florida champion Ed (The Bull) Gantner from steroids predate the Superstar's depressing story.

though not all may be irreversible. They include hypertension, acne, mood changes, testicular atrophy, fluctuating libido and masculinization.

These effects occur in both men and women who use them, and in women can be particularly startling when they include an increase in body and facial hair, clitoral enlargement, male pattern baldness, menstrual disturbances and deepening of the voice.

In Jim Hellwig's case steroid use has promoted muscle density but not the strength to match. Steroids only supply the looks, so Hellwig looks powerful, but after 5 minutes in the ring he's exhausted and dripping buckets. The heavy perspiration is partly due to the "work" and



partly due to one of the side-effects from his using steroids. His body is retaining too much water.

Other side-effects he may already be suffering are alterations in the physiology of his reproductive system, and alterations to his liver's normal functions, which would be terribly hazardous.

Hellwig alone cannot be held responsible for his drug abuse.

The WWF, its owners and promoters also have a lot to answer for. However, it's Hellwig who is taking the greatest risk because it is his own future health and happiness he is taking chances with.

There is no doubt The Ultimate Warrior is still on the wav up. He has a long way to go to achieving everlasting super stardom but all indications are he will still be popular for a while yet. The fans love him, his appearances generate mega-heat, and he's obviously receiving a big push from the WWF. He's arguably American wrestling's hottest property at the moment.

It's not outstanding ability but outstanding hype that has gotten the Warrior over. Hulk Hogan started out the same way. His promoters recognized the way the live crowds were reacting enthusiastically to him (despite the fact he originally worked as a heel!) and gave him a push accordingly. The Incredible Hulk has ridden his wave all the way to the top.

The Ultimate Warrior has a long way to go to ever achieve what Hogan has. They both have many physical characteristics in common - enormous size, long hair, muscular body and sun-bronzed. They have similar interview styles and they both have one other significant

ingredient in common - both have an almost irresistible charismatic aura about them, which has contributed greatly to their successes.

Standing in the centre of the ring Hogan or the Warrior look awe inspiring, but these similarities are all decoration and that's where the similarity ends. In the ring Hogan has always been capable of producing an acceptable wrestling match. He's not the greatest technician, but he executes convincing holds and moves, sells adequately and doesn't tire after only 5 minutes. Not quite.

The Ultimate Warrior has only 3 basic moves in his repertoire - the clothesline, the big splash off the ropes and the one which best demonstrates his apparently mammoth strength, the gorilla press. Hauling up his opponent and pressing him high over head, the Warrior holds it there for as long as he can, often strutting about the ring to show off his "power" to the fans on all sides before releasing his grip and allowing his foe to drop facedown like a stone. This is usually a finishing move - it takes most of The Ultimate Warrior's strength to complete this move - and then he flops on top for the win. The beauty of the gorilla press is it allows The Ultimate Warrior to display his impressive bodybuilder physique and at the same time it's a power move which closely resembles successfully lifting the barbell over his head so it displays the Warrior's impressive weightlifting strength. At least, that's the illusion.

Will the Ultimate Warrior ever reach legendary status? Rumours are rife that The Incredible Hulk Hogan will retire in the near future. If that were to happen the WWF is in a very secure position at the moment. They have in their promotion someone who would make a popular replacement (and that is no mean feat) for the top spot.

Hulk Hogan is a phenomenon. If we're lucky his sort comes our way but once in a lifetime, and sometimes less often than Halley's Comet. The Ultimate Warrior is over in a big way with a huge proportion of the money-paying, turnstile-turning, loyal professional wrestling fans ... a BIG way! He creates wild excitement in a live crowd just with his entrance. It's almost anti-climatic for him to wrestle.

Hogan was one of the first but far and away the most successful of the newlook wrestlers. With his success wrestlers in America have changed in appearance from the big "slob" who wrestled but lacked the just-for-decoration extras, to the new breed of bodybuilder, bug gimmicky - a show-off. Newcomers imitate Hogan including The Ultimate Warrior, to the point of becoming cartoon caricatures, second-rate impersonators.

The Ultimate Warrior is heroic, he bounds into the ring he dishes out quick punishment. He's fast, he's furious, he's like Hulk Hogan.

But he got up to Hogan's size the fast way. The furious way. Like Hogan, he did it with anabolic steroids.

It remains to be seen how far The Ultimate Warrior goes. He may be just another passing fad whose star having risen, meteorically just as quickly falls and fades away. Or he may be the next World Champion and enjoy a long successful career. Whatever the outcome, professional wrestling will be the loser. The Ultimate Warrior is a sad reflection on the state of wrestling today. The Ultimate Warrior is a disgrace, The Ultimate disgrace.

#### EPILOGUE by Dr. D

Shortly after this article was written the Ultimate Warrior carried off the ultimate prize. He defeated Hulk Hogan in just under half an hour at the Toronto Sky Dome to win the WWF heavyweight title. It really looks as though we're entering yet another new era of wrestling and it's a sign of the times that The Ultimate Warrior's first challenger will be Ric Rude one of the few WWF wrestlers who can at least say they've carried The Ultimate Warrior to a decent match.

By allowing the Warrior to become the new champ the WWF is at least being forthright about who it's new desired audience is. The KIDS will hopefully say its alright by paying to see the Warrior defend his title in all the arenas across America, and the KIDS will buy the dolls and the T shirts and the nintendo games and everything else that bears the Warrior's copyrighted and trademarked mug.

But don't expect any classic wrestling matches from the Warrior and his opponents. That would simply be carrying things just too far.

# Is that you reach When the c block hits y that's AMORE I've always wan wear underwear my name on the in public.

**PART 2**

By "Nature Kid" Dennis Twilight.



ILLUSTRATION BY BLACK JACK

Welcome back Piledriver fans to Part 2 of our "so you wanna be a pro-wrestler" article. In our last issue and heart-punch instalment, we covered the very basics of the sport: getting big, learning some elementary holds and we just whetted the ankles of our mind onto the question of taking a 'bump' or fall if you like. There's a lot more ground to cover under the general heading of 'bumps' so we move to our next big category (and those who missed last issue will have to trust my use of the alphabet in our sub-headings) with our entrance music positively ablazing for:-

## D: ADVANCED BUMPING

For me an 'advanced bump' is basically something that is, well, and it pains me slightly to say this, but, is **rehearsed**. That is, pro-wrestling may not be so much 'fake' as it is rehearsed. Now to quote my spiritual mentor Ric Flair "Think about that for a minute". It would be your job to practice that insane move until you got it absolutely. Estopped finish, right. Then on a nightly basis you would have to 'keep on keeping on'.

Lets take a carefully practised move and determine where the underwear line is. Pro-wrestling's wildest hold about now is probably Scott Steiner's "Frankensteiner". This involves Scotty leaping and locking his feet around his opponent's neck, while theoretically shifting his weight back causing the opponent to snap-fly and land on his back. The opponent says "Ouch", Scotty says "Let's see Hogan or Flair do that" and we the fans usually say, "WOW!" or "Take me Scotty - I'm yours".

Think of the sheer joy it would cause in the old nerve endings, let alone Medicare Claim Form, knowing that you are Scotty's opponent and it's now that time in the match where the Steiner brother is going to do the Frankensteiner requiring you to basically jump and land on your poor, delicate Dr. Smith-style back. Moreover, don't forget you would have practised this continuously until you got it to a Bolshoi Ballet level of preciseness.

Another simpler example under this same heading is your average, Barney-fan, suplex. Here's a classic situation requiring both grapplers to be moving as one (and for some reason I'm hearing that old love song "Two Hearts Beat as

One" all of a sudden) to get the move right. If you can't do an advanced bump right, then you're going to have lots of matches that will make the Ultimate Warrior wrestling a child-proof bottle of preparation H, look positively 5-star in comparison. That brings us, spinning toe-hold in hand to our next category.

## E. BUMP "PROTECTION"

This herbal lesson, little grasshoppers, involves one wrestler protecting the other during a major (or for that matter minor) bump. Let's put 2 examples under the PILEDRIVER microscope here. Our first example, in keeping with the attitude of the staff writers to life itself, is **moron simple**. 17 stone wrestler A picks up 17 stone wrestler B for a power slam and instead of letting 34 stone of blood, guts and beer (let alone the speed per hour weight increase question) be taken fully by wrestler B's vertebrae, wrestler A "protects" B somewhat by taking part of the bump on his forearms.

Our second example is more for the thinking wrestling fan and involves the famous finishing manoeuvre that this very magazine was named after - the **piledriver**.

As I saw a tremendous example of this on the Ric Flair - Terry Funk "I quit" match from Troy New York last year, I want to demonstrate my 100 watt marshall stack thinking capabilities and go through the bump protection therein. Remember when Funk had Flair outside the ring and had hit him on the head a few times with the microphone and then Terry applied the piledriver to Ric on the "particle board" as Jim Ross called it? Well just roll that important moment in post Brontasaurus extinction history in the privacy of your own mind and you'll discover something extremely interesting. Not the fat lady yelling "kill him Ric", or the obvious child molestor in the front row looking for some action, but Ric's head never even comes within a (blast of "Waltzing Matilda") "Cooee" of the particle board floor. Terry Funk very gingerly, very tenderly, very Oil of Ulan, rolls Ric from the Piledriver onto himself. It's so smoothly done that I actually missed it the first two dozen times of mouth dribbling viewing.

## F: IMAGE AND FINISHING MANOEUVRE

I haven't lumped these two categories together here just for bilingual purposes. In my opinion a wrestler's overall image and his favourite finish hold must tie in together to form a coherent overall picture. Vince McMahon Junior is probably the master of this type of thinking. Examples? We've got examples coming out of our Koko B. Ware's. Curt "Mr. Perfect" Hennig is a heel, but a scientific one, so his finishing hold, the Perfect-plex, is both evil and tricky. Jim Duggan is a brawler, but a face, so his finishing hold is as thick as he is - the flying shoulder tackle which can be seen over and over at any public transport station during peak hour, anywhere in the world. Let me also give a reverse gear example here: take the Ultimate Warrior. (please) and imagine how tartufo on Zeus' head it would look, for the Ultimate Warrior to suddenly pull out the figure four leg lock as a finishing hold after having spent the whole match missing clotheslines and engineering body slams on an "even gravity can't help this guy" pinciple. So you'd need to put some thought into tying your overall wrestling image (irrespective of whether you are a face or heel) and wrestling style into your finishing manoeuvre. Otherwise you couldn't consider yourself a professional.

So speaking of images or characters, what would you come up with in the 90's as your wrestling persona? It ain't like the good old days as set out by Precious Peter S. where the bad guys were basically all the Germans, Japanese, Arabians and bald-headed Americans and the faces were basically all the Greeks, Italians and Americans with hair.

As fellow columnist and spoiler of the English language Leaping Larry L. has pointed out, right here in these halcyoned pages, nowadays in pro-wrestling the faces eye-gouge and conduct seminars in the dreaded "low-blows" as much as the heels. As the Leapster so succinctly put it, in the modern era, "... a face is a face because I say so".

Well just some helpful ideas here friends in case you're having difficulty coming up with a new idea. How about this one? We come up with a manager who is openly a **drug pusher** - he's the logical progression from Slick. His wrestlers are all junkies (and this is not so far removed from the truth as you would think) and they wrestle openly for narcotics. The drug pusher manager is incredibly evil and has a chain of city nite-clubs that he forever raves about. Anyway one day the hot face of the territory, a caring Government Social Worker on steroids (how's that for originality folks?) takes one of the pusher's men for rehabilitation under the guise of a Club Med holiday and brings him back clean and turned to the side of truth and the Government bureaucracy. The resultant feud climaxes in a special "Say No to Drugs, except steroids" match wherein the pusher-manager tempts his boy with everything, only to find the State Police arresting the pusher-manager for not having a convincing one word name throughout the feud.

## G: INTERVIEWS

If you've made it this far, our final you-are-a-wrestler department that you must conquer is the chew and brew section - interviews. A lot of good wrestlers just can't do interviews and suffer more than their petunias deserve eg. Rick Steamboat and "Dr. Death" Steve Williams. On the other claw-hold some wrestlers can't wrestle or are weak workers but are carried by their interview ability eg. Hulk Hogan and the modern Roddy Piper; ofcourse some are good at both, eg. Ric Flair and Terry Funk and others, like stains on your shorts, have no place being there under either category eg. the Ultimate Warrior and Dino Bravo.

Probably the best way to polish your wrestling speak would be to watch the "masters" in this department such as Jim Cornette, Flair, Hogan, Funk's heel interviews in 1989 and of course keep reading this magazine forwards and backwards wherever possible.

Anyway sports fans, armed with all the foregoing you should be able to enter even an old people's home lacrosse tournament and turn it into a major juicing bloodbath in a matter of one hour time limits. Heck with all this knowledge you could be almost as good a wrestler as .....The Ultimate Warrior. On that anabolic note, I reiterate the comment of that famous resident from Tocola, Mexico, **ARRIBA!** and of course, good head-locking.

Since last issue professional wrestling has been presented by both International Wrestling Promotions and Worldwide Wrestling Promotions. International has transferred its shows to the Marrickville Town Hall, situated in Marrickville Road, Marrickville. Admission has risen to \$10.00. Worldwide has promoted at Manly Warringah Leagues Club (Pittwater Road, Brookvale) and Ingleburn RSL Club (Chester Road, Ingleburn). The former shows are free, whilst the latter cost \$2.00.

A mix and match selection of Sydney's best recent matches follows:-

Shane "Ace" Fenton (of Sydney) defeated Rod "The Stinger" Borthwick (also of Sydney). Fenton, a 19 year old heel, demonstrates great potential. The 18 year old Borthwick (who sports facepaint in the tradition of his nicknamesake) is a babyface and also shows much promise. Both boys made their pro debuts in 1989. In spite of their inexperience, the rookies combined to produce a thoroughly enjoyable bout. Each lad supplemented his solid ringwork with well executed flying before the Ace utilised a Superplex for the victory.

Dazzler Dunlop (Melbourne) defeated Thunderbolt (Sydney). Thunderbolt is a 19 year old babyface who made an admirable professional debut in this bout. The youngster received a good reception from the crowd as he kept his opponent at bay with arm drags, irish whips, arm bars and wrist locks. In reply, Dunlop dazzled with his blend of brawling and science, highlighted by an application of the now seldom seen rolling short arm scissors. A back drop succeeded by a series of drop kicks saw the ascendancy swing to T'bolt. However, the Dazzler intercepted his foe's final drop kick and converted it into a Boston Crab submission.

"Turncoat" Kevin Martin (Sydney) defeated Lou "the Machete" Marcello ("Naples"). Martin was a bona fide star on the World Championship Wrestling (WCW) circuit of the 1970's. His ability was rewarded with the Australian Brass Knuckles Championship and the Austra-Asian Tag Team Title (in partnership with Johnny Gray and with Ron Miller). In the clubs Kevin has won the Australian strap plus the Australasian Tag Team belts (with Bruiser Davis). WCW fans will recall Martin as a babyface but he successfully turned heel several years ago in clubland. Whilst Kevin is now a veteran he remains one of the top three workers in the land.

Last issue it was suggested that a heel turn may prove a boost to the Machete. It now appears that the Piledriver has sold its first copy in Naples as Lou has adopted heelish mannerisms which surely must lead to a role reversal down the line. Despite his attempts Marcello was cast as the face against the Turncoat and he professionally responded with a sound showing. Nevertheless, the potential for a swaggering Italian stallion does exist. For the record Martin utilised his signature finish, the Diamond Twist, to record the victory.

Mr. Wrestling ("Las Vegas") defeated "Bruiser" Bruce Davis (Penrith, NSW) to win the Australian Heavyweight Title. The exploits of the masked man from "Nevada" were briefly covered in Piledriver #3. Davis is a very popular, hard working face, who won the national strap last year. He is known as the "Working Class Man" and enters the ring to Jimmy Barnes' hit of the same name.

In a tight title bout Mr. W. gained an early advantage by "injuring" the Bruiser's left shoulder. Davis staged rallies but his hooded challenger would regain the initiative by reworking the shoulder. The finish saw a ref bump when Bruce hit his opponent and the ring official with a flying cross body block off the top rope. While the ref was down Mr. W. leapt off the top rope to nail the Bruiser with Randy Savage's favourite foreign object, the ring bell. After the necessary body press the masked man was crowned the new Australian Heavy Weight Champion.

Andy "The Animal" Harpas (Cyprus now Sydney), Mike Starr (Sydney) and Thunderbolt (Sydney) defeated Dazzler Dunlop (Melbourne), Lofty Pickford (Sydney) and Ace Fenton (Sydney) in an elimination tag team match. The Animal jobbed during the WCW era as Hurricane Harpas. On the club circuit Harpas has held the Australasian Tag Team Title (in partnership with the great George Barnes) plus the geographically misnamed European Championship. He was a heel throughout his long career but unexpectedly turned

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

WITH ED LOCK

# Harbour City Havoc

DAVIS BACKDROPS MR. WRESTLING

THE AGILE DAZZLER DUNLOP WITH "MUTA COMBINATION"  
(REVERSE CHINLOCK & DOUBLE TOE-HOLD!)

KEVIN MARTIN VS MR. WRESTLING

GUESS WHO? DUNLOP  
VS GEORGE ZORBAS

BLADE RUNNER - INTIMIDATING & TOUGH!

ACE FENTON WRISTLOCKS MOMENTARILY HELPLESS DANNY BURNS

ACE FENTON SAVAGELY SUPLEXES DANNY BURNS

in 1989. With shaven head and hairy body Andy is physically comparable to a somewhat younger George Steele (hence the "Animal" label) yet his turn has been surprisingly successful. Harpas has emerged as the king of the kids, however, without having to eat any turnbuckles.

The faces worked over Dunlop in the first fall before the heels utilised double and triple teaming to turn the tide. A highlight of the opening stanza was when Fenton and Dunlop hit Harpas with simultaneous enzuigiris (ghetto blasters a la Bad News Brown). The heels won the first fall when the Ace eliminated Thunderbolt. Fenton utilised a backbreaker over the knee and Pickford completed the Demolition Drop by leaping off the top rope with an elbow.

The second fall began with the two remaining faces against the three heels. The unpopular trio soon played a numbers game on Starr. Against the odds, Mike would make the tag which the ref would miss as the heels sidetracked the arbitrator. Finally Fenton full nelsoned Starr for the Dazzler's double axe handle blow off the second rope. However, Mike broke away and Dunlop floored his partner. Starr pinned Fenton to even the odds as Harpas brawled with Pickford. The elimination of Ace was the cause of dissension between Australasian Tag Team Champions, Dunlop and Pickford.

Fall number three saw the sides even at two members each. Starr was quickly overwhelmed by the Dazzler, who then tagged Lofty. The champions used the Japanese double pile driver (made famous by Riki Choshu and Animal Hamaguchi) which Pickford followed with a tombstone pile driver. The masters of tag team competition next utilised the Demolition Drop before Lofty pinned Michael with a Perfect plex.

The fourth fall pitted Harpas going it alone against Australia's finest. The heels sold for the Animal from the outset of this fall. Andy scored several near falls with the extra opponent preventing the pin on each occasion. The heels turned it around with sleeper holds

and their patented double teaming. Pickford had Harpas down for the count but dragged him off the mat before the fatal third second. Lofty then locked up his foe and directed him towards the Dazzler's intended top rope double axe handle. Lightning struck twice as Dunlop hit Pickford when the Animal broke free. Andy clotheslined Dazzler from the ring and pinned Lofty.

An argument ensued between Pickford and Dunlop and the pair began brawling. As the champions fought, the fifth and final fall was technically awarded to Harpas. Fenton joined Lofty in attacking the Dazzler, signalling Dunlop as the probable face in a series against Pickford. The breakup of Australia's team of the 1980's is the biggest angle of the year to date.

Mike Starr (Sydney) defeated the Blade Runner (Blacktown, NSW) on a reversed decision. As mentioned last issue, Starr is an established worker whilst still a rookie. The Blade Runner began his pro career as face Gary Scott circa 1987. In 1988 he won the NSW Light Heavyweight Title from Danny Burns but the strap has not been mentioned for some time. Last year Gary turned heel and effectively adopted the leather and facepaint image. Scott previously displayed above average aptitude but as the Blade Runner he is a much improved performer. This bout had a fast opening and both men maintained the pace throughout. Drop kicks, flying head scissors, standing monkey flips, suplexes and body slams were tempered by arm and head locks and kept the crowd heated. A series of near falls by each grappler culminated in Mike and the Runner throwing simultaneous drop kicks. Blade recovered to deliver the Dino Bravo side slam followed by a drop kick off the top rope. The heel then scored a pin using the ropes. David Hart informed the ref of the Blade Runner's misdeemeanor and the match was awarded to Starr. BR challenged Mike and Dave to a future showdown, nominating Ace Fenton as his partner. This challenge promises to be a fine encounter as four of Australia's best young wrestlers will be involved.

... Ed Lock.

# WHAT, YOU WORRY?

*Piledriver*  
AUSTRALIAN  
PILED RIVER PIN-UP  
ILLUSTRATION BY BLACK JACK





-BLACK JACK D.-

# BECAUSE THE BELT'S NOT MINE, I WALK THE LINE DEPARTMENT

★ Barry Windham, no longer a Widowmaker, has returned to the NWA (again). For those who remember, Windham left the NWA in early 1989 right after he'd received a bounty of \$25,000 to undergo a hand operation which he didn't end up having, surfacing instead in the WWF (and several kilos heavier I might add). Apparently Windham was miffed that with the departure of Dusty Rhodes as NWA booker the oft promised NWA title was not going to be his, going instead to Ricky Steamboat.

Windham is to re-emerge as a Horseman (and it's about time they bulked up to 4 again) and with Lex Luger and Sting as this year's potential adversaries for the Horsemen can we argue with the theory that nostalgia is a cushion for hard times?

★ As I write this Wrestlemania 7, in Los Angeles fully one year away, has already sold US \$300,000 worth of tickets. It's always nice, if dangerous, to guess the main event but you can take your pick from the following, all of which have been seriously mooted: Hogan v Ultimate Warrior (rematch); Hogan v Stan Hansen; Hogan v Ric Flair.

★ In the days surrounding Wrestlemania 6 at the Toronto Sky Dome several Toronto newspapers had stories detailing alleged meetings between WWF boss Vince McMahon and Ric Flair despite the fact that Flair was several thousand miles south working his butt off in the ring almost non-stop. Plus, they also carefully avoided mentioning Flair's re-signing with the NWA for one more year effectively barring Flair from making the jump to New York until well after Wrestlemania 7. So why all the hoopla? Because despite Vince McMahon's refusal to acknowledge the existence, much less the competition, of the NWA, it's a given that for years every wrestling fan in the world has dreamed of the possibility of a Hogan/Flair matchup, and McMahon is no dummy. What wrestling fans dream of they'll pay to see in flesh and blood or at least on a TV screen. The WWF fans will go to see Hogan irrespective of who the opponent is and the hardcore fans who would only pay to see special WWF events would fall over their six-packs to buy tickets to see the Nature Boy carry Hogan to a four star match on pay-per-view. It's probably only a matter of time. In 1988 Flair came as close as he could to joining McMahon's carnival. For now, at least, the carnival is over.

★ Terry Taylor, the unfortunately named Red Rooster who scored some sort of prize in our PILEDRIVER Readers' Poll, is no longer in the WWF but is still contractually bound to the Fed until August. His boss, Vince McMahon, made it perfectly clear that he could wrestle for independents, but not the NWA where he could meet up with his old UWF buddies. Till then Taylor is doing the rounds of the Louisiana circuit where hopefully the cock's comb will be buried for good.

★ Remember our story last issue about title changes not being announced in the WWF until after the matches had aired on TV? We thought the situation had changed but apparently not so. Despite the Colossal Connection's big bust up at Wrestlemania 6, Andre and Haku were still buddies in their match against Demolition in Honolulu a week after Wrestlemania 6 which sure would have had me thinking seriously about the mat world if I'd paid to see both cards. And how come Big Boss Man played heel against Jake Roberts at the Tokyo Egg Dome a fortnight after Wrestlemania and 3 months after his turn? Okay, it's not a trick question. I'll accept schizophrenia as an answer.

# WRESTLING UPDATE

BY LAZ 'DR.'D

★ Sometimes you just have to cry. First Sting injured his patella seriously enough to have him laid off for several months only a fortnight before he was scheduled to win the NWA title from Ric Flair. And then Lex Luger, who'd been hastily turned face to cover for Sting, refused to accept the title which had been promised him for some time. When Luger finally decided to accept the title, Ric Flair didn't want to lose the title that particular weekend because certain contractual conditions hadn't been met by the NWA. And when Flair finally agreed to hand over the strap to Luger, Sting announced that his comeback could be earlier than first realized, leaving the NWA in a quandary. Should Flair drop the strap to Luger immediately or wait for Sting's comeback which would probably net a bigger gate? (And let's not kid ourselves, money is the bottom line in professional wrestling). After all the fans had seen the Flair/Luger bout two years running and Luger had yet to score a win when it counted. Sting, on the other hand had gone to a 45 minute draw at Clash 1 and would be coming off a hot injury to fight Flair - a perfect recipe for a title change with a hopefully massive audience share as the prize ingredient. We have a little while yet to see who wins this bake off.

★ The Ultimate Warrior's first major title defence at the Tokyo Egg Dome against Ted diBiase was rated "R" - for "Rousy" as the Japanese would say. It's unfortunate, to say the least, that di Biase who had a reputation of sorts with the Japanese fans, from the days he teamed up with Stan Hansen saw that reputation disappear in a morass of badly timed and badly conceived moves by the Warrior. Dave Meltzer states in his description of the match that the Japanese fans were throwing catcalls to the Warrior to the effect of "What kind of a promotion is the WWF if you're their champion?" The finish, need you ask was the old Warrior splash onto the million dollar vertebrae and "turn him over for the quick pin before I die of exhaustion" in just over 6 minutes.

★ Former Skyscraper Mean Mark Callas is using that old Ox Baker standby, the heart punch, as a finishing move. I have fond memories of the heart punch (similar to the effect caused by my mother's cooking) and one of its foremost practitioners, former WWF champ Stan Stasiak. Pro-wrestling illustrated Bill Apter once did a photo-spread where he volunteered to be hit by Stasiak in the interests of journalism. Journalism would probably have had its interests served better if Stasiak had hit Apter harder.

★ Meanwhile that other former Skyscraper the charismatic and appropriately named Sid Vicious, has emerged in suit and tie as the 4th Horseman. LLTrouble is his chin keeps fraying his silk ties.

★ And the NWA is going environment conscious with its proposed Rumble for the Rainforest. Can we also look forward to a Survivors Series for the Sahara from the WWF? How about a Wrestlemania for Whales? Oh, sorry that's actually Dusty squaring off against the Earthquake

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WELL AT LEAST PRO WRESTLING TORCH GOT THE ADDRESS RIGHT.

## STOP PRESS

The proposed tour by Lou Thesz, legendary NWA champion, and independents like Tully Blanchard, Ivan Koloff, Ken Patera and others for June has been postponed until January 1991. We'll have updates in future issues.



★ The Tokyo newspapers reported that the Ultimate Warrior defeated Hulk Hogan at Wrestlemania - the date of this report was one week before Wrestlemania.

★ Other interesting titbits from the Tokyo show.

★ Out of an announced audience figure of over 53,000 fans, 41,000 fans actually paid to see the combined All Japan/New Japan/WWF show on the 12th of April, 1990.

★ The New Japan wrestlers only wrestled each other to ensure that their promotion came off as the stiffest of the lot. No foreign work styles to worry about, no problems of meshing the differences, no possibilities of slip ups.

★ Best of the "mixed" matches seems to have been Randy Savage v Genichiro Tenryu which was very reminiscent of Savage/Steamboat from Wrestlemania 3 with plenty of

pinfalls and good heat.

★ Funniest post match interview was with Axe of Demolition who ignored the Japanese press' questions on his past as the Masked Superstar (Bill Eadie). Mr. Eadie pretended he was making his Japanese debut despite a mountain of clippings to the contrary.

★ Hulk Hogan made it surprise number 2 for the month by departing from his WWF house style and working New Japan style in his match against Stan Hansen in the main event. Let's not forget he was the New Japan World Champion in 1983. The bout was wild 'n woolly and involved more blood than is the norm at any WWF show. Even the ending saw Hogan foregoing the old legdrop in favour of the lariat (clothesline) and pin.

★ In the admission we never thought he'd make department: Vince McMahon, in talking to the Japanese press said, "We think the Japanese fans know the difference between the WWF and Japanese wrestling. I agree Japanese wrestling is better than WWF wrestling, but I think the fans enjoyed and were excited by the show".

★ Wrestlemania 6 didn't do anywhere near as well on pay-per-view as the WWF had hoped. Reasons given were the stiff price (\$29.95 US), the poor angle (or non-angle) set up by the NBC Prime Time Main Event with Buster Douglas and the classically doomed hero v hero confrontation. Wrestling fans like seeing good v bad, neat v nasty, babyface v heel. Which is why when Hogan meets the Warrior next time (and as sure as Brute Bernard was no speech therapist there will be a next time) the painted one will be inevitably turned heel.

★ Jerry Lawler's interviews are the only thing holding up the USWA shows at the moment. If I see one more busted guitar or one more pole match (irrespective of what's on the other end of the pole) I will personally make a wish on the next shooting star that one more independent promotion join Continental, Central States, Stampede et al in the wrestling firmament.

★ In the wake of the NWA's financial crisis, wrestlers' and managers' salaries have been cut down severely. People like Beautiful Bobby and Sweet Stan from the Midnight Express, Jim Cornette, Scott Steiner and Paul E. Dangerously were willing to accept salaries varying between \$120,000 and \$156,000 per year. Not quite so compromising were the Road Warriors who, it seems, will leave for the Orient, come December time when their contracts expire. (Tell 'em Hawk, Aarghh!) Roadies currently earn a cool half million for working 250 dates.

### YOU CAN FOOL ALL THE PEOPLE ALL THE TIME DEPARTMENT

★ Don Muraco's shows in New Zealand featuring the Bushwackers, Haku, Bob Orton, the Bolsheviks and Jim Powers, among others, were billed as the "Bushwacker Homecoming Tour '90" with the combined gates from the 3 nights totalling NZ\$700,000. The prices of tickets ranged from \$12 to \$75 for front row seats. The best match was Cowboy Bob versus Norman Smiley, a good technical wrestler who has wrestled on several occasions for Akira Maeda's UWF. Needless to say Butch and Luke were as crummy as can be expected.

That's it for this issue. No live cards, no TV shows - keep trading videotapes folks. Flair v Steamboat from Chi-town is as good on the 15th viewing as it is on the first.

BUT BEFORE WE GO: I had to share this little titbit from the 'Age' newspaper's sports section with you;

A would-be wrestler grew four centimetres in two months to reach the height requirements of the Japan Sumo Association. He told newsmen that stretching exercises helped, but he finally beat the tape by giving himself a lusty blow on the head, thus causing an instant bump that took him over the top.

FESTIVAL HALL, THE 'ARENA' HERE IN MELBOURNE WAS/IS A PARTICULARLY ABRASIVE CONSTRUCT, A FORM OF ARCHITECTURAL EPILEPSY.

As I entered this 'beast' for the first time to witness wrestling in the flesh, so to speak, it was like I'd crossed into some extra dimensional setting for a heathen passion play. A heavy pall of smoke hung about this most Mephistophelean of places and I was struck by the way the colour red permeated the room (perhaps willing the blood to be spilled from the combatants).

This smoke served to mask the ugly throng and made the entrance of the wrestlers that much more other worldly as they made their way towards the ring, "the squared circle of ritualistic battle", as Zodiac Orton described it.

I was mesmerized by the ring. It seemed such a strange entity laying at the heart of this strange beast. Keep in mind that all the T.V. in those days was in black and white so the colours really hit me like being at a viewing of 2001: A Space Odyssey on acid.

Unfortunately after a few years of going along to this strange place the memories of most matches and incidents have tended towards severe blurring (this was 20 years ago!)

Thousands upon thousands of people saw the T.V. shows so that stuff has been retained somewhat in our collective unconscious, but the live stuff was a bit too ephemeral to recall in its entirety or with any conviction. But there were incidents and fragments of memories that have overridden my amnesia.

The overall impression I got, which may be influenced in hindsight by the antiseptic nature of today's grappling, is the violence and most of all, the blood.

The feud between the Peoples Army, led by King Curtis and Mark Lewin against Big Bad John's Army, featuring Waldo Von Erich and Abdullah the Butcher, amongst others was fantastic and very bloody. Everyone bled buckets in that feud. Seeing some of the old black and white footage of those matches confirmed how wild they were and it wasn't just the exaggeration of memory.

It was wild! Cages, fire throwing, turns all form of foreign objects (or international objects as Ted Turner would prefer) abounded during the war. But most of all I remember the blood.

One incident that exemplified the bloody violence of that strange squared circle is etched onto my mind like an ancient aboriginal rock painting. It involved an incidence of violence in a match between Abdullah the Butcher and the Golden Greek Spiros Arion. They hacked away at each other's foreheads with a ball point pen and I swear, a piece of Abdullah's horribly scarred head flew onto the woman sitting in the front row just near me. She screamed and started crying and the atmosphere was very uneasy.

I was in the second row and got splattered with Abdullah's blood. Never had I experienced such brutal violence up close. These were two very big men covered in blood and not using a single wrestling hold, just belting each other very, very hard. I don't know if they were shooting for a few minutes but it left an indelible impression on me, and my mum who had to wash the blood from my tee-shirt.

I suppose it's because I was aware pro wrestling was a little bit 'rigged' that the events that seemed to transcend fiction to some degree were the ones I tended to remember.

Does anyone remember an incident where King Curtis, as a heel, fought with Mark Lewin out into Dudley Street in front of Festival Hall and tried to throw Lewin into a passing bus? It was reported in The Sun Newspaper on the Monday morning following as "wrestling gets out of hand". I don't know if it was an angle portrayed with over exuberance or not but I always remembered the faces of the people on the bus as two blood soaked madmen urged on by hundreds of strange people tried to ram each other into their chosen mode of transport.

Probably my most satisfying experience at Festival Hall involved one of my very favourites, Tiger Singh. Lord Athol Layton, wrestler cum commentator, and my personal most despised wrestling personality had brought out to

# THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

Australia his protege young clean cut Dewey Robertson (who inexplicably mutated years later into the Missing Link who appeared in the WWF a few years back!)

Young Dewey, in his debut, was pitted against Tiger Singh who had been in town for quite some time. I feared the worst, the young kid pins Singh and my fave has to leave. As the match progressed I felt more and more certain it was a set up for a Dewey Robertson victory because Singh was beating him senseless then applied his finishing move, the Cobra, a form of sleeper.

I waited for Robertson, the new kid in town to kick out and snatch victory. But he didn't. He succumbed to the Cobra hold and the referee raised my hero, Tiger Singh's hand in victory.

I was so happy I ran across ringside to where Tiger was making his exit and, amidst the boos and jeers from the face loving throng, I placed my hand on his shoulder and said 'you're the best Tiger'. He stopped and placing his hand on my shoulder nodded his head in genuine appreciation then left the area. I got into a few fights at school trying to convince people that this actually happened.

Actually my friend Harry was there with me and figured he'd get in on the act as well. He went up to King Curtis and said 'good on you, Curtis', proffering his hand in reverent friendship. King Curtis roared and gesticulated in Harry's face which cracked me up and left Harry a quivering. On the very rare occasion I've been to Festival Hall since then I swear I can still see the spectre of Harry's trembling form on the spot he was nailed to by his fear of King Curtis.

King Curtis was insane. And boy did I like him when he was a wild bad guy. Once, myself and a couple of friends Harry and George, a Yugoslav guy I had brought along (I must have brought along everyone I knew at one stage or another), had sneaked up through the balcony area to a spot where you could see the wrestlers waiting to enter the fray.

Curtis saw us as we were hanging over the edge cheering him on. He was about ten feet below us and pacing up and down, bellowing like Vulcan pounding away at some invisible enemy. Well as Curtis turned in his manic pacing he suddenly ran and leaped up at us and took an almighty swipe at our three stooges like heads.

We all flew backwards in fear, and excitement, but George flew back the furthest. He remained pinned against the wall for several seconds and remained as white as a ghost for the remainder of the evening. King Curtis liked scaring my friends.

As the card for the upcoming Saturday night's mayhem was displayed on Sunday's World Championship Wrestling, I eagerly scoured it for names of new wrestlers. Two that I was instantly intrigued by were the team of Rip Hawk and Swede Hanson, but unfortunately their names were more interesting than they were.

Looking like rejects from a Scandinavian gangster film these bottle blondes were nevertheless involved in a particularly wild incident at Festival Hall. Now I'm having a bit of trouble ascertaining who their opponents actually were as I seemed to think it was Mario Milano and Antonio Pugliese but it may have been Mark Lewin and Pugliese, heck it could have been Tex McKenzie and Lord Littlebrook, but it's the peroxide flash of Hawk and

FOR SATURDAY 5 FEBRUARY 1966

# WRESTLING

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AGAINST (Mexico City)

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(Canada)

(Canada)

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Luther Lindsay v. Waldo von Erich  
(Oregon U.S.A.) (Germany)

SUPPORT BOUTS

Dick Steinborn v. Pampiro Firpo  
(Germany-U.S.A.) (Argentina)

Roy Heffernan v. Con Talios  
(Australia) (Greece)

Eddie Swan v. Hans Schroeder  
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All Wrestlers Fly Ansett-ANA

Hanson that I remember best.

The action spilled out onto the arena floor and down along the aisle to a strangely deserted area to my left. My seat was on the aisle about six rows back and Hawk and Hanson and their opponents stopped next to my seat and started exchanging body slams, sleepers and all manner of brawling moves.

Most people retreated out of self preservation but my curiosity was greater than my cowardice so I stayed put, some four or five feet from the fray, and watched as these eighteen stone plus men in their underpants were beating each other upon the cold wooden floor. Rip Hawks head was banged repeatedly into the arm of my seat as I sat anxiously through this five minute impromptu 'Trash Can Royale'.

That was close enough to the action for me as I was sure that at one stage Rip Hawk was going to drag me into the fray for having the audacity to remain in my seat during the mayhem.

Too many wonderful incidents and occurrences are now just fleeting fragments of memories that I am unable to give flesh to. I'm sure anybody who followed wrestling through that era knows just how special it was. It was certainly a unique phenomenon here in Melbourne as the whole town seemed to know about the wrestling.

I don't think there has ever been a large city anywhere in the world that was as engrossed, amused or as aware of wrestling as Melbourne was during those times.

After Jim Barnett left the country the promotion was taken over by Tony Kolone. I think Odeo Cologne could have done a better job.

Things just weren't the same after Barnett's reign as promoter and my interest waned after the halcyon days of the late sixties and early seventies as I became more interested in other physical pursuits that didn't involve a wrestling ring.

I tuned in occasionally but it took my old tag team partner Harry to make me tune in again to see the best wrestler he'd ever seen. It was about 1975 or '76 and the wrestler's name was Bruiser Brody. I tuned back to see him. Harry was right! He was the best I'd ever seen.

NEXT ISSUE: MY FAVOURITE MEMORY OF BRUISER BRODY!

PILEDRIIVER READERS WHO REMEMBER AND LOVE BRODY, PLEASE SEND IN YOUR FAVOURITE MEMORY OF HIM FROM T.V. OR LIVE SOMEWHERE, SOMEWHEN. KEEP IT SHORT, A PARAGRAPH OR SO, WE'LL PUBLISH THE BEST NEXT ISSUE!



## Part Two

IF DULL DINNER PARTIES HAD  
"LOSER MUST EAT DOGFOOD"  
STIPULATIONS, WE WOULD NOT NEED...

# The Best Matches of Our Lives

★ ★ ★

BY LEAPING LARRY L

★ ★ ★

By popular demand of the masterful yet strangely marriageable editor of "Piledriver" I take my second potshot at the glories of Wrestling Past, with neither fear nor favour, nor too much thought beyond the first iridescent matches that come to mind, now any real sense of grammatical construction for that matter.

I will venture that the constitution of a great match in what Dusty Rhodes calls "This Great Spote" can vary wildly from great moves, to great building of tension and story telling, to a sense of importance due to careful booking leading up to a 'momentous climax' (like Hogan-Warrior), to just sheer craziness, or any proportions of the above. Failing that you can just grab Ric Flair, Curt Hennig and a broomstick for a round-robin tournament and have three great matches. ++(see below to see how various federations would book this tournament).

Anyway, if I, like James Woods in the movie "Videodrome", had suddenly developed a VHS sized hole in my lower abdominal region, these are the matches I'd plug in to entertain my kischkes.

### RICK FLAIR vs THE GREAT MUTA (NWA, 1989)

No so good with the dates and places, but this was after Keiji Muto had well and truly Funked up his knees on his NWA tour, so Flair and he out of nowhere switched to a nice, convincing, cheerfully homicidal All-Japan style match, complete with stiff chops and kicks, lots of matwork with logical development of hold sequences, and a slow gripping build to an exciting climax, with satisfying finishing sequence. (I wish my sex life were so good).

I suppose we take it for granted mostly that Flair can do anything up to fixing most household appliances and resolving problems of Lithuanian autonomy, but to work a match this good, in a style he rarely does matches in, was a pretty big ask. Same goes for Muta/Muto really, given that his 'home' style is New Japan, which is quite a different approach.

This could have played on the best of All-Japan cards, and more than covered for the moves the G.M. couldn't do because of his punchy patellas.

### NOBUHIKO TAKADA vs BOB BACKLUND (UWF, Early 1989)

A lot of Pro Wrestling fans supposedly don't like UWF style because of the intense concentration on mat work and containing or 'stretching' holds, let alone because there are no US style 'characterisations', no tag matches, no weirdo stipulations, 'flying', rope moves, foreign objects etc.

A lot of UWF fans supposedly didn't like this match because Backlund 'broke' from their quasi-shoot style, used pro style moves, and upset the rhythm of the typical UWF match, which segues believably from complex kicking/fainting set-ups, into gruelling judo-based mat work, and bursts into surprising but viable 'strong' suplexes, but rarely anything else.

I think both schools of thought don't even make it as kindergartens of thought, especially in the light of actually watching this match. The UWF style when executed by guys like Takada and Yamazaki, is an eminently viable and watchable pro-wrestling genre, but like the All-Japan style it requires power concentration, except moreso, because every move tells part of the story. It certainly wouldn't hurt to have a PhD de Thump in Judo or Freestyle Wrestling or a Martial Art to follow it, though.

Ahem. Onwards.

Secondly, Blacklund 'betrays' nothing here. He just brings more freestyle into the style, and lets a bit more air into the match's tyres by using more variety than the UWF fans are used to. There is nothing glaringly unrealistic in his moves. The contrast of Takada's strike and stretch approach with Backlund's throws and take-downs and tie-ups undeniably makes the match more wakey-wakey for regular pro-style junkies.

For an old guy working in a style radically different to any he'd worked before, Backlund did amazingly well, but he did brilliantly by any standard anyway. Backlund's UWF tour has drawn surprisingly harsh, personal criticism but the basic facts are that he was cheated of the agreed ending in this match (quite evident on the tape), rubbished for his performance, basically had the crap kicked out of him in the second one by Funaki to unintelligible ends, and was then written off completely by the UWF, the news sheets and the fans.

This is one of the best matches of the last few best-match-packed years, and it's fully 50% due to Backlund's performance. Takada is great too, of course. Hunt this sucker down, and give the Howdy-Doody Devil his due.

#### LUGER vs STEAMBOAT (NWA, Baltimore 1989)

One of the three forgotten top-shelf matches from the Flair/Funk I undercard this features Luger doing the hot part of his routine, the entirely defensive, pig-arrogant heel stuff - paired with an unusually hardcore, avenging good-guy Rick Steamboat performance, which takes the goody-two-shoes curse off Ricky's regular joe outside the ring persona. This perfectly resolved the scenario set-up at the last card where Luger turned on prone Steamboat out of 'jealousy'.

Apart from the diverting but 'cheater' opening sequence where they drop the No DQ stipps and thus 'siren spotlights style' pointer the ending, was solid work from beginning to furniture removal conclusion.

#### GREG VALENTINE vs RONNIE GARVIN (WWF, Royal Rumble undercard 1990)

I'm not going to sit here with my fingers crossed, whistling Dixie and hiding my hatchet and the best part of a cherry tree in my back pocket and tell you this was a great match. But I did and do find this Battle of the Barney Rubbles, and inadvertant parody of Flair/Funk II, immensely entertaining. Part of it is context, in that a twenty minute 'Duh'-as-in-deliberate AWA 70's type match stands out like man-size prawns at a barmitzvah on any WWF card since the year of our Lord Hulk Hogan. Part of it is the stiffness, as they both chopped each other into Coles deli croquettes. Part of it is the 'submission only' stipps, about as common in the 'now look' Cosmo-Man WWF as enchiladas at Bairnsdale wedding receptions.

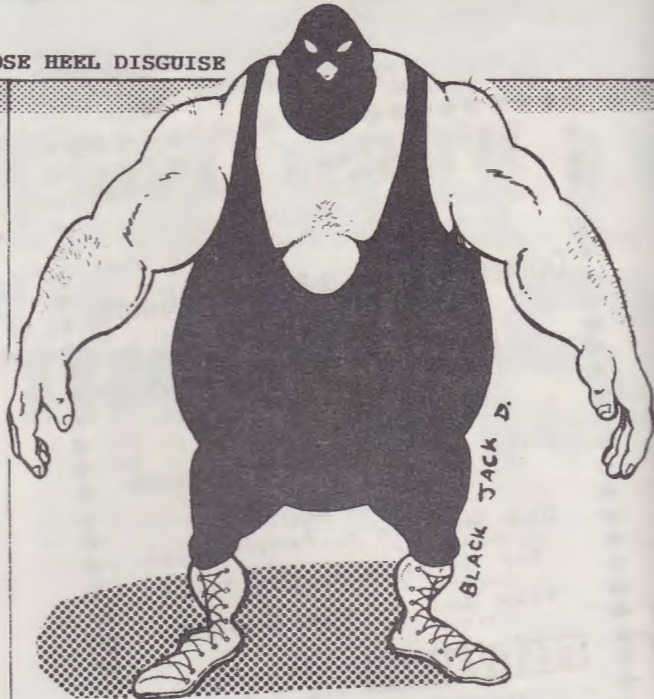
They had the smell of actual wrestlers intent on doing bodily harm to each other, they resolved a feud in satisfying fashion, they did the 'promised' ending and did it clean. Also I kind of like G.V. or as Pa Leapster refers to him "No Lips", and I've had a grudging regard for Garvin's no nonsense (and no moves, but let that pass) chop-crazy attitude since he honoured that AWA commitment to do a job for Greg Gagne after R.G.'d signed with the WWF, and managed with "Stoat" Gagne's help to turn the crowd completely around on the Gregster simply by working hard and being himself, while Greg helped by just being himself.

This holds the attention, and more, for the duration, lets both guys do what they do best, and is probably the last really good match we'll ever see either of them in. Also it killed me how many times they both went for pinfalls and press moves despite clear announcement that it was "I Quit" stipps and pinfalls didn't count, prompting the normally script solid Schiavone/Jesse announcing team to admit they couldn't understand it either.

In between those infrequent all-fans-bow-down CLASSICS, it's little pleasures like this that keep the fans fans.

#### FANTASTICS vs SHEEPHERDERS (NWA, 1st Crockett Cup)

Your more delicate sensibilities among wrestling fans (there's a concept) profess a dislike of blood matches, but me, I take 'em like I find 'em, and this one I find rare-medium, heavy on the haemoglobin. The first



attraction of this unlikely match is not the go-go-gore at the end, but the very successful middle-ground achieved by two vastly divergent teams.

The Fantastics, noted speed-limit violators and flyers; the Sheeps, at the time, hardcore mid-card brawlers. They do it mostly by brawling here, but really building on the teams' growing gut-hatred of each other, first getting the Sheeps over as a threat, then getting the Fantastics over as tough enough to be competitive. Then its Flowing Rivulets of Spilled Claret City. Can't remember any hot moves from this one, but it proves when everything else is done right, especially telling us kids a story, you don't always need the hot moves.

++ (How various promotions would book the hypothetical round-robin tournament involving: Ric Flair, Curt Hennig, and a broomstick).

AWA - The broomstick comes from Kathy Gagne's closet. It wins.

WWF - The broomstick is told its physique isn't large enough. It goes on a heavy course of steroids, and quadruples in size. McMahon checks it out and books it to win the tournament, but in an earlier Saturday Main Event Match with the Ultimate Warrior, the broomstick defies instructions and doesn't hold back its hot moves, showing the Warrior up embarrassingly. The Broomstick is fired. They can't decide who of Flair and Hennig should win so they resolve it by the time-honoured WWF procedure of giving it to the guy with the biggest tits.

NWA - Jim Herd is concerned the tournament idea lacks something, so decides to exploit the rights to some fictional characters Superstation TBS already owns. Curt Hennig is placed on stilts and dresses up as jovial comical face Herman Munster. The Broomstick has two fluorescent tubes glued to it and becomes Binky, the Intelligent Light Sabre (carried to the ring by midget wrestler Lord Littlebrook, dressed as Luke Skywalker). Ric Flair has a rider on his contract about being portrayed in moronic fashion, so they can't touch him, but Herd comes up with a genius idea of giving him a manager, an evil Japanese business suited manager, who says nothing, does nothing, never interferes in matches or contributes in any way to crowd reaction; they hire George Scott, and dip him in a vat of lemon-lime cordial. Come tournament time, it's obvious Flair is going to win, when all of a sudden there's a run-in by a whole pack of wrestlers: the Terrorist, Secret Service, Russian Assassin, Jacko, Myron Putznik, Attila the Punk, Rabbi Schmueel Ben-Civic Centre, and the "Ooh, you are awful" character from the Dick Emery show, all played by Jack Victory in the performance of his life. They destroy Flair and the Broomstick for ten minutes until the Ding Dongs, and their new Eight Man Tag Partners, the Hostess Twinkies come in for the save. A title match is declared between Flair and Victory's latest character, the Mighty Hamburglar; Ding Dongs to referee inside a steel thickshake.

# AMAZING RESULTS !

## PILEDRIIVER 1989 Australian Readers Wrestling Awards

Your response to our 1989 Australian Readers Wrestling Awards Poll was, to say the least, phenomenal. We really weren't expecting such a large number of replies.

In fact the results are not only enlightening but we feel they're also conclusive of just what Australian fans think of pro wrestling.

Before going into the final results, I'd just like to go over why PILEDRIIVER decided to attempt a readers poll, and why we're so pleased with the outcome.

Everyone at PILEDRIIVER knows just how popular pro wrestling is in Australia - your many letters in the past have shown us that. We can usually only ever fit about 10 percent of your letters into our regular letters page.

But we thought you may feel a little isolated in your own fanaticism for wrestling so we've tried to bring all of you closer together through a comparison of your likes and dislikes with other fans opinions through a readers poll.

Even if you didn't enter our poll you're sure to be inspired by the results from the readers who have. Also, it was to break down the barriers that we pruned a little into your private life and asked for voters age, sex and number of years a fan.

Despite pro wrestlings apparent favouritism for male wrestlers the ranks of wrestling fandom display no such bias. Age and sex seem more evenly divided as you'll see from the results presented later on. Your never too young or too old to be a fan.

Another result which drew a collective sigh of relief from PILEDRIIVER's writers was that the results weren't all WWF. That is to say, despite the WWF's high profile through its TV coverage, the NWA and Japanese and Australian wrestling also figured in your replies.

We admire your obvious inventiveness and good taste in gaining access to good wrestling from around the world either through magazines or videos.

Perhaps one or two of our questions weren't entirely clear and some of your answers gave us a happy giggle. The "Best Angle" especially confused readers.

"Angle" is pro wrestling slang for "a mechanism used to establish the reason for a feud or match to build fan interest".

We read all your comments and appreciated them all. We've included some of the best after the appropriate sections. Thanks for your fantastic response. And now, without further ado, here are the results as voted for by you.....

### AGE, SEX, ETC.

About 90 percent of the readers who responded to our poll were male. Of course, the other 10 percent were female readers. Our youngest reader was 13 and the oldest was 54 years old. The average age was 24.

Some readers were new to the ranks, being in only their first year of wrestling fandom. The longest period given for being a fan was 31 years. The youngest age we calculated any of you began being a fan was 4 years old. The average age any readers began being a fan was 12 years old.

Finally, most readers ticked PILEDRIIVER as "wonderful". No one ticked "awful", but some of you only ticked "OK". Shame! Shame! Shame!

### THE BEST WRESTLER 1989

1. Ric Flair
2. Mr. Perfect Curt Hennig
3. Ultimate Warrior

Runners up included Randy Savage and Sting. Ric Flair easily won the Best Wrestler '89 with over 30 percent of

the vote. Mr. Perfect was very close behind. The Ultimate Warrior gained about 10 percent of the vote. Hulk Hogan only got 2 votes.

COMMENTS: Russell Tangey - brilliant wars against Funk and Steamboat; Mark Nugent - wrestler of the decade; Dan Lennard - never has a bad match;

### WORST WRESTLER OF 1989

1. Andre the Giant
2. Zeus
3. Honky Tonk Man

The voting was very close, but Andre snuck in to take out the prestigious Worst Wrestler '89 Award. Others who got votes but didn't get a place in the top three included Hacksaw Jim Duggan, Ultimate Warrior, Hogan, Akeem and Koko B. Ware.

COMMENTS: Andrew Prentice - (Andre) is as stiff as a back brace, slow as a turtle; Geoffrey Bruce Williams - chokes well, wrestles badly; Dan Lennard - should have retired with dignity 10 years ago.

### BEST TAG TEAM

1. Demolition
2. Steiner Brothers
3. Tully Blanchard and Arn Anderson

Demolition easily took Best Tag Team with just under 30 percent of the vote. The Steiners took only about half that percentage of votes and the Road Warriors were just pipped at the post by Blanchard and Anderson for the third spot.

### BEST MANAGER

1. Bobby Heenan
2. Elizabeth
3. Sensational Sherri

Bobby Heenan took just over 33 percent of the vote to take Best Manager. Sensational Sherri was leading early but was overtaken and Elizabeth made a late run to get second spot. The losers included Jimmy Hart and Jim Cornette.

### BEST ANNOUNCER

1. Jesse Ventura
2. Jim Ross
3. Howard Finkel

This was the only non-event of all the categories, a no-race. Jesse Ventura won easily without any competition. He took 80 percent of the vote, Jim Ross in second place got only 10 percent and Howard Finkel 7 percent. Vince McMahon Jr., Gene Okerlund and Gorilla Monsoon got two votes each!

### FAVOURITE SPECIAL EVENT '89

1. Baltimore Bash
2. Royal Rumble
3. Summer Slam

There was a big spread of Favourite Special Events for the year of 1989, but the Baltimore Bash still won easily with 30 percent of votes. Runners up included the NWA Halloween Havoc, Wrestlemania 5 and Starcade '89.

### BEST MATCH

1. Curt Hennig vs Brett Hart (Prime Time)
2. Rick Rude vs Ultimate Warrior (Summer Slam)
3. Steamboat vs Flair (Chi-Town)

A hard one ... some of these are a compilation of "best matches", but them's the breaks. What can I say?

## BEST FEUD

1. Flair vs Funk
2. Hogan vs Savage
3. Brain Busters vs The Rockers

These three had little opposition from other feuds. Rick Rude vs Roddy Piper and Garvin vs Valentine were the only other real contenders. But the Flair vs Funk feud would seem the natural winner. The Best Wrestler of 1989, Terry Funk back in top form and lots of heavy backing from the NWA.

## BEST ANGLE

1. Flairs' babyface turn
2. Savage leaves Hogan, sets up Wrestlemania 5
3. Bruno Sammartino refereeing in NWA

Remembering that an angle is meant to promote fan interest, Flair's antics in (and out) of the ring always draw the crowds, but his babyface turn drew most of your votes. The Rougeaus' and Bossman's turns also drew some votes, as did Ted DiBiase's "wealthy angles".

## BEST GIMMICK

1. Curt Hennig
2. The Great Muta
3. The Bushwackers

Apparently Curt Hennig's "Mr. Perfect" gimmick was the perfect gimmick to win first place. He was far and away the most popular. The Great Muta's "Red Mist" from his mouth also proved a popular gimmick, as did the Bushwacker's eccentric activities. Runners up included Jake Roberts and his snake Damian, the Big Bossman's Prison Officer outfit, and Dusty Rhodes WWF antics.

## WORST GIMMICK

1. Red Rooster
2. Akeem
3. Brutus Beefcake

Apparently dressing like a rooster, wearing a red comb and crowing didn't impress too many readers. The Red Rooster won Worst Gimmick easily with just over 20 percent of the vote. Akeem's gimmick was also unimpressive. And Beefcake's barbering similarly unimpressed. Lanny Poffo's poems and Brother Love's pompousness likewise, seeing them as runners up.

## MOST OVERRATED WRESTLER

1. Hulk Hogan
2. Ultimate Warrior
3. Zeus

Hulk Hogan took 40 percent of the votes to beat the Ultimate Warrior easily with double his score. Zeus just beat Bad News Brown for third with Andre, Lex Luger and Terry Taylor all having a good showing.

## MOST IMPROVED

1. Curt Hennig
2. A tie: Rick Martel and Beefcake
3. Lanny Poffo

Curt Hennig has proven very popular in several of our categories. This is his second win (plus a shared first with Brett Hart for Best Match), not to mention second place for Best Wrestler '89. He must be doing something right. Our first tie sees Rick Martel and Brutus Beefcake share second place and Lanny Poffo secured third place. Rick Rude just missed out, followed by Dusty Rhodes, Lex Luger and Brian Pillman.

## MOST UNIMPROVED

1. Hulk Hogan
2. Ultimate Warrior
3. Andre the Giant

Hulk Hogan took Most Overated Wrestler and now he wins Most Unimproved. Ultimate came a very close second and Andre had little competition for third. Losers included Hacksaw Jim Duggan, Randy Savage and Honky Tonk Man.

## BEST INTERVIEWS

1. Macho Man Randy Savage
2. Roddy Piper
3. Ultimate Warrior

Savage may not be the grætest wrestler ever but out of the ring he took a lot of votes, 25 percent of them infact to win Best Interviewee. Losers included Curt Hennig and Jake the Snake Roberts.

## GREATEST TECHNICIAN

1. Bret 'Hitman' Hart
2. Mr. Perfect Curt Hennig
3. Owen Hart

What goes on in the ring, after all, is what it's all about. Runners up included Hiro Hase, The Great Muta, Sting and Ronnie Garvin.

## MOST EXCITING MOVE

1. Scott Steiner's 'Frankensteiner'
2. The Superfly
3. Randy Savages Flying Elbow

No contest. And there has not been such an exciting (or new) move in wrestling rings for a long time which never fails to get a huge reaction from the crowd. Awesome! Runners up included Demolition's 'Axe Handle', and the "DDT" and Sid Vicious "Helicopter".

## WORST HAIRSTYLE

1. Red Rooster
2. Honky Tonk Man
3. Hulk Hogan

Poor Red Rooster. He won in a landslide. You have to feel sorry for the guy having to "comb" his hair up and dye it red. Hulk Hogan got third partly for his gradual loss of hair! Runners up - Beefcake, Koko B. Ware, Rick Rude and Brother Love.

## PERSONAL FAVOURITE

1. Randy Savage
2. Roddy Piper
3. Mr. Perfect C.

Runners up - Hulk Hogan, Ultimate Warrior, Bret Hart, George the Animal and Dusty Rhodes.

COMMENTS: (Randy Savage) Brett Meyers - speed, agility, power and skill. The complete wrestler! (Roddy Piper) Julian Argenti - he's the best! (Curt Hennig) Darren Cole - I love his cockiness and perfect plex.

## PERSONAL MOST DISLIKEABLE

1. Rick Rude
2. Hulk Hogan
3. Hacksaw Jim Duggan

COMMENTS: (Rick Rude) kylie Bolger - he makes me sick. (Hulk Hogan) Peter J. Sym - Puke-a-Mania. Boring. Tom Vida Jr. - Hulkamania sucks. (Hacksaw Jim Dugan) Amanda Butcher - talentless hack. Michael Grima - interferes, stuffs up matches.

## ALL TIME GREATEST

1. Rick Flair
2. Hulk Hogan
3. Randy Savage

COMMENTS: (Ric Flair) Michael Price: daylight second and third. - Lemster: Whooooooooo! Steve Chard: No. 1 for nine years and still going. (Hulk Hogan) F. Lattanzio: well, who else was I supposed to say? Leo Pierroti: great champion. (Randy Savage) Andrew Mossos: consistent, hard working, awesome. Brett Meyers: the only wrestler that deserves it. Eat his dust Hogan.

RUNNERS UP: (Sgt. Slaughter) Darren Cole: a great brawler, wasn't scared of taking a few knocks. (Brute Bernard) Alex Klufinski: out and out scary. (Bulldog Brower) Ian Daley: most likely to kill someone. (Abdullah the Butcher) Amanda Butcher: no relation. Just being nostalgic. (Bruiser Brody) Andrew Prentice: an absolute madman. He could do it all! (Ultimate Warrior) Pat Bolger: I would be one of his little warriors any day.

So there you have it, the results of your votes for the best and worst for the year 1989. We also asked you to rate from 1 to 10 your preference for what attributes make the perfect wrestler. I'm sure you've all been dying to see the results, so here they are ...

- |                           |                           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Technical skill (16%)  | 6. Physical Build (10%)   |
| 2. Work Rate (14%)        | 7. Interview Skill (8.5%) |
| 3. Charisma (13%)         | 8. Gimmick (6.5%)         |
| 4. Strength (12.5%)       | 9. Babyface/Heel (5.5%)   |
| 5. Theatrical skill (11%) | 10. Goodlooking (3%)      |

So there it is. Does that sound like any wrestler you know?

Last issue in PILEDRIVER we took a second look at the Japanese War of '84 when two arch rivals, Antonio Inoki and his New Japan and Shohei 'Giant' Baba and his All Japan fought it out for wrestling and box-office supremacy. In particular we focused on the remarkable career of Tatsumi Fujinami and his part in it all.

This time we are going to examine the rocky road to success for another wrestler who played a vital role in much of the turmoil in 1984 - in fact, he was the main protagonist.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Superstar Riki Choshu

Riki Choshu's unique talents and phenomenal appeal have been the cause of many sensational events in recent times. His jumping from one promotion to another in '84 is just one example of the enormous influence his selfish ambitions have had on the Japanese scene.

Everyone has at least one goal in life. Riki Choshu was no different. He had a dream. Choshu's dream was to one day be the best professional wrestler in Japan. Ahead lay heavy opposition from the promotions as well as from every other wrestler who also had the same ambition - practically all of them. But with Choshu it was a burning, all-consuming obsession which couldn't be diverted or delayed.

In 1984 Choshu almost single-handedly altered (some would say sabotaged) the balance of power between New Japan and All Japan for the sake of his own benefit. Despite Choshu also eventually re-establishing a status quo, of sorts, things in Japan have never really ever been the same since. Even today the after-effects of his actions can still be seen.

Consequently, it can be said that the modern history of wrestling in Japan runs parallel to Choshu's own story.

Riki Choshu was born on December 3rd, 1951, in Seoul, South Korea, to poor farming parents. His real name is Mitsuo Yoshida. His Korean background still remains a secret to most Japanese wrestling fans. He chose his professional name, which means: Riki - King

# RIISING SUN RASSLIN'

## PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING IN JAPAN

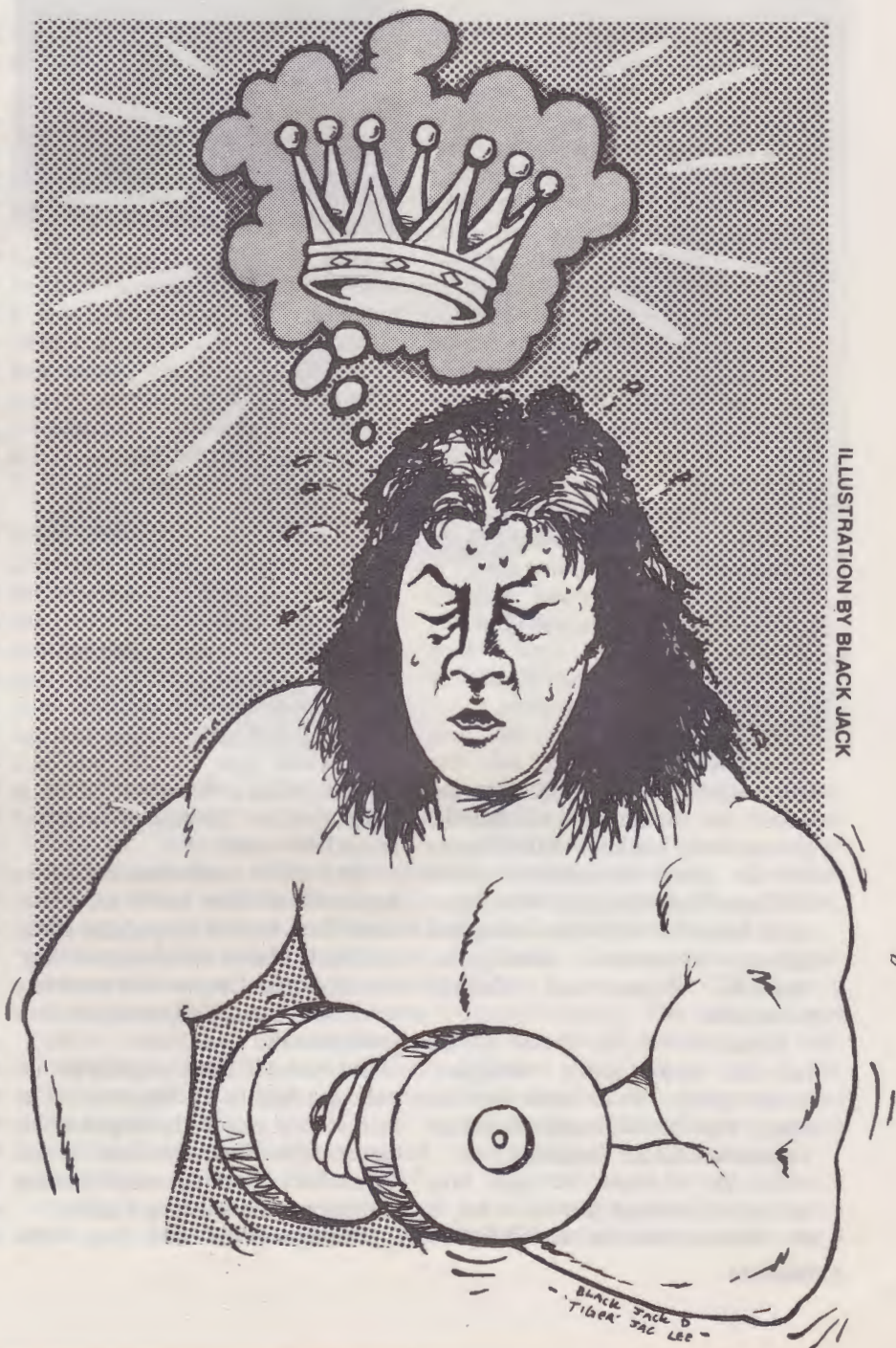


ILLUSTRATION BY BLACK JACK

of...Choshu - the town in South Japan where he now resides.

Choshu was an accomplished amateur wrestler who represented South Korea in the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich as a freestyle wrestler in the 220.5 pound weight class, but was eliminated in the first round.

He was lured away from the amateur mat by Antonio Inoki who had spotted him in competition and was impressed by what he saw. Inoki signed him to a contract with his promotion, New Japan, in December, 1973. Choshu made his professional debut at the age of 24 in August 1974. Originally he wrestled under his real name, not adopting the ring name of Riki Choshu until 1977, by which time he was a mid-level star, and co-holder of New Japan's tag team title with partner Tatsumi Fujinami.

At this time Choshu regularly lost to the top US stars imported to tour for New Japan including The Incredible Hulk Hogan and Stan Hansen. Choshu remained stuck as the No.4 and 5 babyface Japanese in the New Japan wrestler's hierarchy.

In early 1982 Riki Choshu left on a tour of Mexico and managed to win its version of the World title from Mexican wrestling star El Canek. This was a turning point in Choshu's rise to fame.

Upon returning to Japan with his reputation enhanced New Japan decided to turn Choshu into a heel in October, 1982. He was matched against Tatsumi Fujinami in an incredible tag team fight which started an immensely successful feud that lasted for nearly two years.

The feud was over the now defunct WWF International title. The belt went back and forth for the whole 24 month period, but the contest never got stale. Riki Choshu led an army of wrestlers called "Ishingun" including top New Japan heels Masa Saito (Choshu's original trainer), Animal Hamaguchi, Yoshiaki Yatsu and Kuniaki Kobayashi.

Fujinami was the leader of the babyface army called "Seikigun" which included in its ranks Antonio Inoki, Yoshiaki Fujiwara, Nobuhiko Takada and Kazuo Yamazaki.

As an example of just how successful the feud proved to be, in the first six months of 1983 New

Japan's profits tripled. More than 90% of all cards were sold out and fans had to be turned away. Tickets for ringside seats cost up to A\$75 each for big matches.

In particular the fans had discovered, not before time, that Riki Choshu was made of superstar material. Younger fans loved him because he was a stylish performer who set trends and had tremendous stamina.

Older fans and other wrestlers alike admired him because he



worked so well and was generous seller. He put in consistently hard and extra fast bouts and always with a high level of technical skill, displaying his carefully studied and deep understanding of the theory and dynamics of wrestling that make for an exciting and credible match. He had mastered a very large arsenal of moves and holds.

Originally New Japan was never going to promote Choshu that hard, so in the early years he achieved his popularity from Inoki or his company. But when he became one of the hottest draws through the enormous success of his feud with Fujinami, Inoki finally gave him the push which saw Choshu not only achieve being a household name in Japan, but saw his reputation spread around the world.

By 1983 he was ranked among the top dozen wrestlers world-wide. Ever since then he has topped the cards, putting in almost endless great "big" matches. Riki Choshu had reached a level of status afforded to few professionals.

However, in some respects he had only just begun. Choshu was yet to face several major challenges in his career. The final outcome would ensure Riki Choshu a unique position in the annals of wrestling history.

Through 1983 and into 1984

Choshu's popularity continued to sour, helping to make Inoki's promotion the hottest in the world. The TV ratings were huge. New Japan was turning profits of A\$12.5 million a year. But there were some serious questions which had to be answered. Like why was the pay so small? And why wasn't Choshu the top star at New Japan by now?

In fact, disaster for Antonio Inoki had been smouldering for several months. It was discovered company profits were being secretly channelled into private business interests Inoki had in Brazil. What's more, Choshu knew he could never be No.1. That was the spot Inoki reserved for himself.

According to the seniority system Tatsumi Fujinami would step into the position once Inoki retired. Choshu believed the system unfair, and he had ambitions to be the top star, a goal he felt he may never achieve at New Japan the way things stood.

The timing couldn't have been better, therefore, for Inoki's rival promoter Giant Baba to have approached Riki Choshu. On the 21st of September, 1984, Choshu and nearly a dozen other New Japan wrestlers jumped to Baba's All Japan promotion company. Choshu and several of the other top performers were made executives and stockholders in All Japan (For more background see last issue).

Giant Baba, who had run a distant second at the boxoffice to Inoki for so long was now in a position to put

## WRESTLING Information Line



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New Japan out of business once and for all. As we saw last issue this wasn't the case, Tatsumi Fujinami almost single-handedly carried New Japan for three years. Nonetheless, the end came mighty close.

As you can imagine, with Riki Choshu on board All Japan became the hot circuit in Japan. The work rate produced by the newcomers was of top calibre. Many of the All Japan wrestlers responded to the quality of the work and improved their wrestling as well. Undoubtedly All Japan had the best action to be found anywhere in the world. The jump made the headlines in Japan.

Choshu had no problem with the public accepting his jumping. Although the full story may not have been known, everyone was aware Inoki had business troubles.

In many ways Choshu's fans saw and accepted him as a loner, a free agent, without owing allegiance to anyone or any particular promotion.

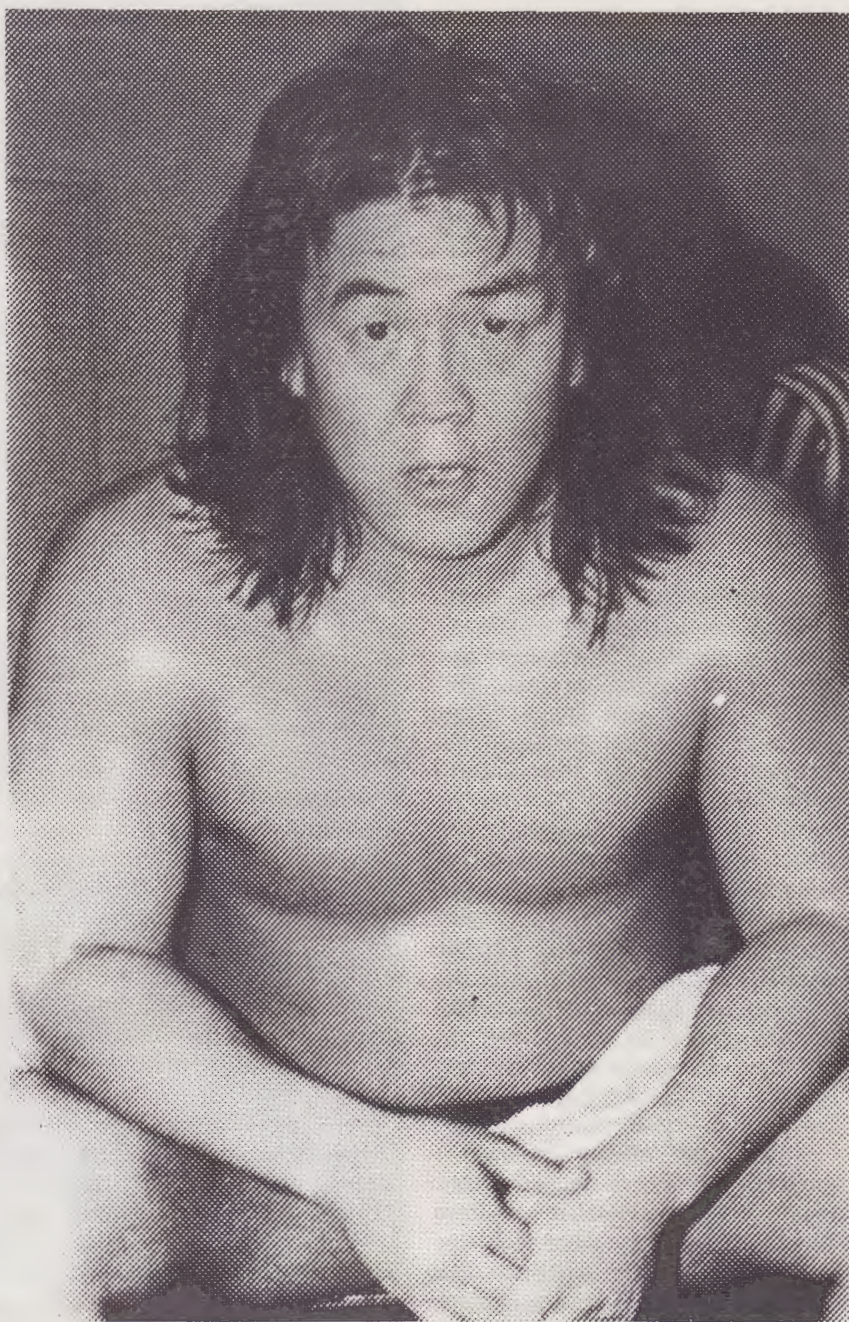
Unfortunately, things started to sour for Choshu at All Japan. Once you become the best there's nowhere to go but down. He started to get nervous about just how stable his standing was. When Baba revealed he intended to bring in Hiroshi Wajima - a legend in sumo wrestling but untalented as a professional and with a bigger public profile than Choshu - and that Baba wanted to give him a push, Choshu threatened to quit.

At the same time the fans and the media were getting nostalgic for the legendary matches he used to have with Tatsumi Fujinami. Choshu's work rate was still very good, but he felt trapped. He had just turned 35 and some people were (incorrectly) suggesting he was slipping, none of which was doing any good for his confidence.

In late February '87 Choshu disappeared. The reason given was apparently true, although it was probably also a handy (pardon the pun) excuse to lay low for awhile and plan a course of action.

After assessing the situation he decided it was time once again for a change. By late March everyone knew his plans of taking almost his entire "army" back with him to New Japan.

Antonio Inoki couldn't have been happier with this sudden turn of



events. His New Japan was being soundly thrashed at the box office and the television ratings were frighteningly low. The promotion needed saving and Riki Choshu was the biggest star there was. Of course, Inoki had to offer Choshu an enormous amount of money to secure his signature. (It's rumoured Choshu today earns in the region of A\$500,000 a year for his services.) The second jump also made the headlines.

Riki Choshu and his group started for New Japan in June, 1987. Choshu's first appearance back on TV was the broadcasting of his

wedding. His first televised wrestling match was in a 2-hour special on October 5, and much hype surrounded his return. Everyone expected big things from Choshu, particularly large television ratings.

Things didn't turn out as hoped. Choshu's return to TV was a disappointment. The numbers were low and his 35 minute match with Fujinami hadn't lived up to the "legendary" level everyone had anticipated. Choshu's career was at its lowest point for five years.

For someone of Choshu's fame it would take an extraordinary event to occur to restore his reputation, and a

most extraordinary event was about to happen. It wasn't planned, but due to an unusual and complicated chain of events it all now seems somehow inevitable it did happen.

Until Riki Choshu returned Akira Maeda had enjoyed star billing and the reputation of the rebellious hero at New Japan. Choshu took Maeda's spot and Maeda quickly sank down the ranks. He retained his popularity but his pride was badly battered. And New Japan had made the decision they were going to lower his profile even more.

Both Choshu and Maeda had enormous egos. Neither had ever gotten on particularly well with the other, and things hadn't improved. The tension between the two, the professional and jealous rivalry, got worse and worse. Things came to a head on the night of November 19th, 1987, in Tokyo in the main event, a six man tag team match in the beginning stages of New Japan's annual tournament.

Choshu led Hiro Saito and Masa Saito against Maeda's team of Nobuhiko Takada and Osamu Kido. Problems surfaced early. Maeda wouldn't sell for Choshu. Choshu wouldn't sell for Maeda. There was a lot of hard slapping and a typical brawling. The heat in the crowd was enormous. The fans were expecting something unusual to happen, and they were loving it.

There was uneasy feeling of impending disaster in the air. At one point Choshu refused to go down when Maeda attempted to trip him. It was obvious to everyone that Maeda, in particular, was getting very riled up by the whole thing.

Finally, Choshu had Maeda's partner Kido in the Scorpion Death Lock when Maeda rushed into the ring to make the save with a kick, but this was no ordinary professional wrestling kick. Maeda had decided he wasn't prepared to remain in Choshu's shadow any longer.

From Choshu's blind side Maeda kicked him full force as hard as he could in the head, breaking two bones behind Choshu's eye and causing the entire side of his face to swell up and the eye to close. The blood was flowing freely down his cheek.

Maeda dared Choshu to do

something about it but cooler heads prevailed amongst the other wrestlers who were shocked by the ferocity of the attack. Takada allowed Choshu to pin him almost immediately to end the match.

Riki Choshu may have been physically injured but it certainly didn't do any harm to his reputation (or, ironically, Maeda's.) Choshu was back in the headlines once again.

Despite this unexpected additional benchmark to his career Choshu still couldn't reach the level of popularity he had once enjoyed.

His second jump had damaged his reputation. Some fans saw it as a double-cross on Baba which cast Choshu in a bad light. What's more, New Japan's TV ratings had still only improved slightly. He hadn't saved the ship. New Japan's TV time slot and television exposure were both demoted.

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To keep everything in perspective, Riki Choshu's popularity may have faded somewhat but it was only in proportion to and a reflection of the decrease in popularity of professional wrestling in Japan in general.

The truth is there was a waning in the public's interest in wrestling. It wasn't any longer the hot commodity it once had been and fans were slowly drifting away, a kind of wrestling recession.

Choshu wandered into 1988 without much inspiration. He'd been forced out of the tag team tournament through the Maeda incident (it's rumoured Choshu and Masa Saito had originally been slated to win the title), and New Japan had lost the use of one of their largest and most popular live wrestling venues until 1989.

A riot had taken place at Sumo Hall, Tokyo, in December '87 when the main event between Antonio Inoki vs Riki Choshu, a sell out house of 11,000 seats drawing over \$500,000, was apparently to be reworked.

As an angle to start a new feud, before the main events had started, Masa Saito and Big Van Vader (Leon White) challenged Inoki to a fight that night. The fans were furious when Inoki accepted because they'd come to see him wrestle Choshu. When Choshu appeared in a tag team

semi final match, the place erupted. "Stop the fight!" the fans chanted and started to throw chairs, tables, eggs, and anything else that wasn't screwed down.

To try and quell the rioters Inoki agreed to wrestle Choshu but the six minute match was so uneventful that tempers got worse. Finally, it took the riot squad an hour to stop the vandalizing and disperse the angry mob.

For the first couple of months of '88 Choshu was still feeling the effects of Maeda's shoot kick. He was forced into a short hiatus whilst convalescing. Some people have suggested he was also getting his nerve back. He had been shaken badly by the whole thing. In the long run the kick did nothing to harm Maeda. It fitted in quite well with his reputation as a "real" wrestler.

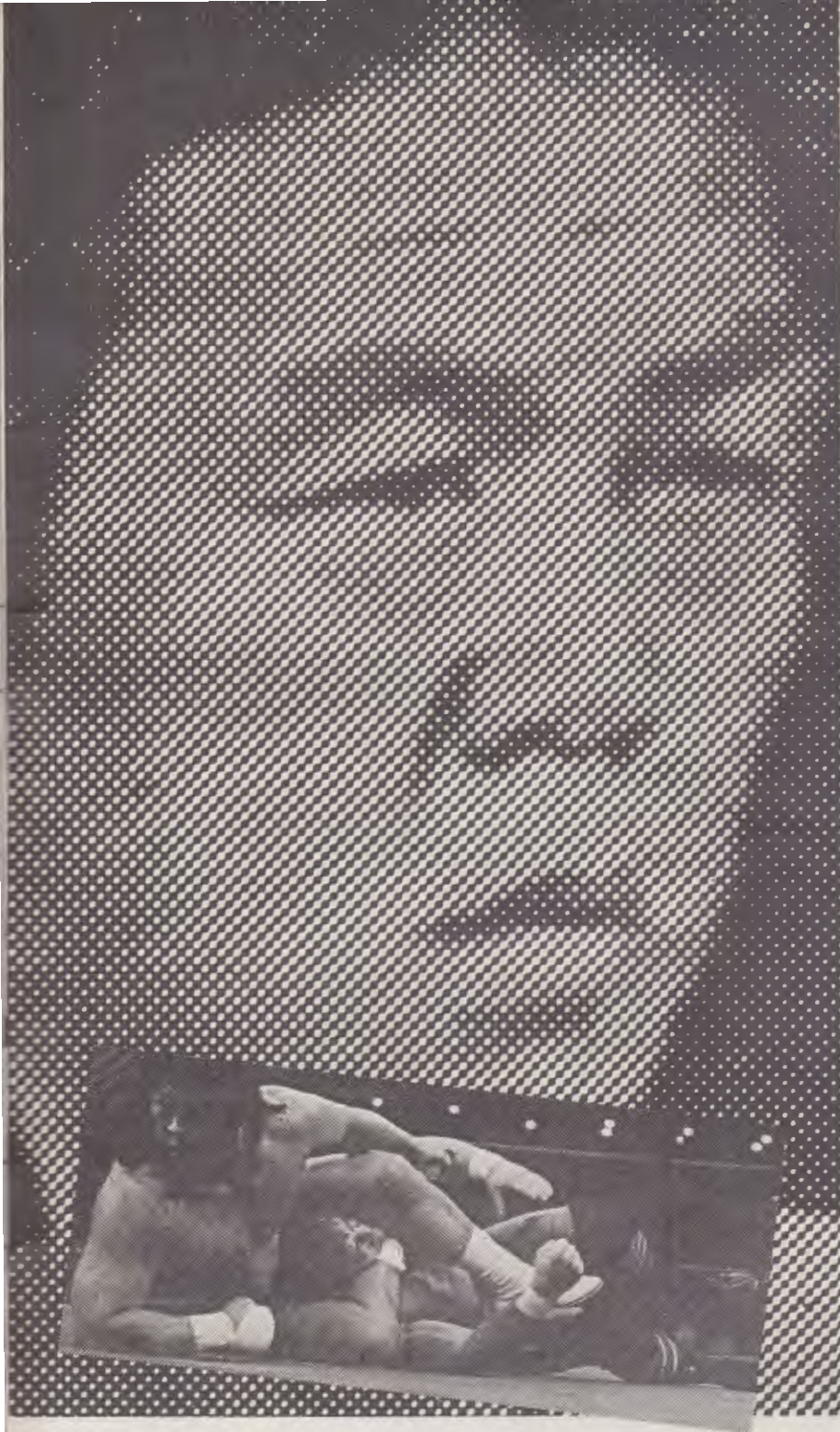
Other than the public sympathy he received Choshu didn't benefit professionally, as Inoki would have hoped, from the kick. Despite his legend being further enhanced, the incident didn't transfer immediately into notable increased gatebox takings. Nor did it do anything to improve the TV ratings, or Choshu's wrestling for that matter.

Once he did get back in the ring he certainly wasn't inactive, but he'd obviously lost some of his old confidence and charisma. He'd put on weight and subsequently he was wrestling slower and it hampered some of his trademark moves and holds. He lacked drive.

Even so, Choshu remained New Japan's biggest asset. Maeda had quit rather than accept punishment from Inoki. His leaving left Choshu as the unchallenged superstar, but it also led to catastrophe for Inoki in more ways than one.

Firstly, the New Japan fans were frantic to see Maeda and Choshu in a rematch. It's hard to imagine how this fight would have ended. With Maeda gone it was a matching which would never be. Inoki lost millions of dollars which the feud had the potential of making at the box office.

Even more damaging for both Inoki's New Japan and Baba's All Japan, Maeda left to reform the Japanese UWF, now a modern day success story. The UWF has done so well and "stolen" so much revenue



from the other promotions gatebox earnings that the other Japanese promotions have had to alter their wrestling to imitate the UWF to combat it and try and cut losses.

More than ever Inoki needed a champion like Choshu to keep the loyal New Japan fans. In the first six months of '88 alone Choshu won New Japan's Heavyweight belt (temporarily, as Inoki was injured and felt Choshu deserved it - but only

for a month) as well as winning the tag team title (a year later) with Masa Saito.

However, in 1989 Antonio Inoki scored a legitimate coup when he signed on ten Russian wrestlers. The Soviets helped New Japan's business to boom. It was an expensive gamble which paid off. In April '89 nearly 54,000 fans crammed into the Tokyo Dome to see them debut. New Japan made over A\$3 million from this

event alone.

This couldn't have been a better break for Choshu. The Russian "army" of wrestlers were brought in as the heels to fight the best wrestlers New Japan had. And who led his own "army" against the Soviets? Who else - Riki Choshu!

Fighting for the honour and pride of Japan Choshu shone (and still shines) as the hero defeating the invaders. New Japan's fans have rallied behind Choshu and Co. By late 1989 the TV ratings were once more looking very healthy.

1990 is the start of a new decade of achievement for Choshu. Currently he is co-holder of New Japan's tag team title, and at the same time he holds the IWGP Championship belt (defeating Big Von Vader.) With Inoki spending more time in his recently elected position as a Japanese politician and Fujinami semi-retired due to a back injury, it's likely Riki Choshu will be New Japan's Number One babyface and Number One wrestler for a long time to come.

What's more, Choshu has never been a slouch in the ring either. Whilst other wrestlers may have become incredibly slack performers once made champion, Choshu has never been content to dwell on past victories or rest on his laurels. He remains a star because of the breadth and the depth of his matches - all great performances.

Everything Riki Choshu has done whether right or wrong, despite the risks, he had done fully prepared to accept any eventuality. If he had not taken some of the chances he took with his career there's no doubt the Japanese professional wrestling scene would not be as exciting today as it is, even if it is only as an indirect consequence of his actions.

It is the outcome of the fact that he has been prepared to take calculated risks that Riki Choshu is the first of the "new generation" of wrestlers to achieve the same hallowed status with the public as the legendary Antonio Inoki and Shohei Giant Baba.

Superstar Riki Choshu - like him or hate him - has to be respected. Most people have chased a dream, but very few have so clearly and for so long been able to remain focused on it. Even fewer ever achieve it.

# INTERNATIONAL HEAVYWEIGHT WRESTLING CHAMPIONSHIP

**Bruno  
Sammartino**



**Toru  
Tanaka**



**George  
Gouliovas**



**Mario  
Milano**



**Red  
Bastien**



**Buddy  
Rose**



**Waldo  
Von Erich**



**John Valiant**



**Mr Fuji**



**Dominic  
Denucci**



**PLUS**  
Grego  
George  
Barnes

**MELBOURNE PALAIS, ST. KILDA**  
**31st MARCH, 1978**