

Wrestling Observer Newsletter

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Years of lies and deception caught up with Vince McMahon in what had to be a week the likes of which he has to hope he'll never have to live through again.

A series of wrestling scandals, from Hulk Hogan's lies about steroids, to claims of homosexual harassment of the wrestlers all the way to the charge of WWF executives sexually abusing underage ringboys went from the front page of newspapers around the country and even as far as England, all the way to People Magazine, Larry King Live on CNN and the syndicated Phil Donahue show.

On Monday, the one charge that threatened the merchandising future of the multi-million (not billion) dollar Titan empire was settled in a most bizarre turn of events. Tom Cole, the 20-year-old former ringboy from Utica, N.Y., who claimed he was sexually harassed or abused at various times by all three WWF officials who are no longer with the organization, Pat Patterson, Mel Phillips and Terry Garvin, received \$70,000 for two-years back-pay plus was given a multi-year contract to return to his former job as a ringboy. The settlement occurred just before a lawsuit was to be filed and before a taping of the Phil Donahue show where Cole was asked to be a guest. The fact a deal was made was no surprise because of the amount of bad publicity this case would have brought against Titan, but the nature of the deal was. The most bizarre aspect came after the Donahue show, when Cole and his older brother Lee, who had been befriended and had depositions done for their lawsuit by Barry Orton, Billy Graham and Bruno Sammartino, turned on them saying that of the panel on the Donahue show, only one guy cared about them and that was Vince McMahon.

Cole's charges, which were first reported in the New York Post, by Phil Mushnick, went attributed in a devastating front page story in the San Diego Union-Tribune by Jeff Savage last Wednesday. Entitled, "Sleaze no illusion in world of wrestling," the story detailed drug abuse, both anabolic steroids and recreational, sexual harassment and the most damaging claims of sexual abuse. Many newspapers around the country made reference to it as the week went on and it led to a national television feature Thursday night on Entertainment Tonight with Orton, Billy Jack Haynes and McMahon. It was also covered nationally Thursday night on ESPN Sports Center. The story had quotes from Cole and Chris Loss, two of the three ex-ringboys who came forward with claims of sexual abuse while minors working for Titan Sports. Cole said that while on tour with the WWF in 1985 at the age of 13, an employee would film Cole with a video camera while fondling his feet and masturbating. "He had a foot fetish," Cole said. "He would play with all the young boys' feet for hours at a time." Loss was 16 when he began working as a ringboy in Niagara Falls in 1989. He said the same employee cited by Cole "accidentally" stepped on his foot when he met him, and then when he said his foot hurt, the employee took off his shoe and began rubbing. "Boys are getting propositioned and played with all the time," Loss said. "You sort of put up with it because you can make a lot of money." Cole also claimed he was grabbed in the genitals numerous times by a second WWF official and the harassment continued unabated until he was fired in February of 1990 after rebuffing an advance from a third official. In that incident, Cole said he was driven to the official's house where he was asked to smoke marijuana, snort cocaine and have homosexual sex. When Cole rejected his advances, the official refused to take him home, so Cole slept in the WWF official's van in the driveway. He was fired the next day.

The same day, in an item entitled "Taste Test" in the Village Voice, it detailed the claim of Murray Hodgson about his two meetings with Patterson. Hodgson was hired in July of 1991 to announce for both the WWF and the World Bodybuilding Federation (in fact, he's the announcer on the first WBF championships videotape). In court papers, Hodgson said that on July 29, 1991, Patterson approached him at a wrestling television taping and asked, "So you're the new guy? .

So what do you taste like?" Hodgson replied, "You've got the wrong guy." Patterson: "Not if you want to keep your job, I don't. Think about it." On August 20, Hodgson was fired. On August

29, Hodgson met with McMahon and after the meeting, Patterson was waiting for Hodgson when he came out of McMahon's office and allegedly said, "Wouldn't listen to me, would you?"

The next day, Steve Planamenta sent out a press release saying: "The San Diego Union has published a story containing serious inaccuracies about alleged widespread wrongdoing in the World Wrestling Federation. We do not believe the charges in that newspaper to be true and we are so outraged that we have asked our attorneys to determine what legal action might be appropriate. However, as a responsible corporate citizen, we recognize that even false allegations must be investigated, and we will continue to do so. The WWF promotes good family entertainment. We are incensed that anyone would accuse us of behavior not in keeping with this philosophy. While we are not immune to human error, we rigorously enforce corporate policies regarding employee practices and behavior in keeping with the high standards demanded of a family entertainment company."

Let's see now, serious inaccuracies about things we don't believe are true but we're going to investigate accusations we've already determined are false.

On Thursday in the New York Post, a page seven story with a front page tease was headlined "Boy Sex Scandal Rocks Wrestling." The story repeated the claims from the San Diego story the previous day and included items from a letter to the Observer from Tom Hankins (see letters pages) which was written because Hankins was outraged when reading the 3/9 Observer where McMahon denied Orton's charges.

More national publicity came that same day when the inevitable front-page story in the Los Angeles Times broke with the behind-the-scenes story on Hulk Hogan. Entitled, "Wrestling's Star Takes a Tumble," the story by John Cherwa and Houston Mitchell ran in newspapers throughout the country over the next several days. While not nearly as devastating to either the WWF or Hogan as stories that were yet to come, it still detailed Hogan's steroid use, with Superstar Billy Graham comparing him with former Washington D.C. mayor Marion Berry, David Shults claiming Hogan not only was a heavy user but also a black market dealer and that he shot Hogan up hundreds of times. The Times also noted that in 1980, Hogan was arrested in New Jersey for a firearms violation and served six months probation, after which the felony charge was dropped. Barry Orton noted that when he met Hogan in Las Vegas in the early 1980s, Hogan asked him if he could score some cocaine and Barry said that it was routine that he, Hogan and others would go up to a room after the cards whenever Hogan came to Las Vegas to snort lines. Billy Jack Haynes detailed a trip from Madison Square Garden to Hogan's Northeastern house in Stamford where Hogan was driving and going 80 miles per hour while swerving from lane-to-lane because he was both drinking and doing drugs (marijuana and Valium) while driving while Haynes was in the car with Hogan, Brian Blair and Brutus Beefcake. Hogan and Haynes nearly got into a fight in the car but later that night Hogan apologized. Nova Lanktree, one of the country's leading experts on sports merchandising said that these allegations will end Hogan's career as a spokesperson for any product. "If it is true that he has used steroids and other drugs and has denied taking steroids publicly, then no company or advertiser will touch him."

The same day, The Oregonian in Portland, Ore. had a story headlined "Portland wrestler links Hogan to steroid use." The story, based on the accounts of Haynes, mentioned the two threatening phone calls to his father (this past Sunday he claimed to have received a third threat, this time on his phone; two others involved in reporting on this story also received anonymous threats this past week, one via telephone and another via a strange visitor to their mother's apartment telling the mother "Your son is living in a dangerous neighborhood"). Haynes talked of injecting Hogan with steroids in a Denver hotel room. "I don't want to sound like I'm drug-free," Haynes said. "I'm not an abuser. I started in 1986 taking pills, Dianabol. I was taking pills before I took shots of testosterone and used

steroids for six months. I started getting really light-headed. My mood swings changed tremendously. I knew basically something was wrong. I wasn't me. I was already big, like 260. It made you strong and made you more of a man. You wanted to skill somebody. I'm just glad I got off them. but nobody took them for me. I took them.

"Vince wanted you to be drugged up. Every day you'll be traveling and by being drugged up you were wrapped around his finger. The drugs made you content."

The story even made the front page of the London Daily Mirror across the Atlantic Ocean with the headline, "Hulk quits in cocaine shame." The story was the only one that quoted a spokesperson for Hogan, his personal agent Peter Young, who said, "I don't think Hulk ever denied taking steroids, but it was under medical supervision."

The first San Diego story and the Thursday Post story led to McMahon booking himself on Larry King Live in an effort to stifle the momentum of the various stories. But before King came a third straight front page story in San Diego, entitled, "Will Hulk's next fortune be made in Japan?" The story noted Hogan's agreeing to a two-year, six event contract for \$600,000 with New Japan Pro Wrestling. Graham noted in the story that Hogan sometimes used cocaine before his matches and that he had unintentionally injured opponents while high on coke (I do know of one wrestler who told me years ago that Hogan apologized to him after a match because he stepped on his back and injured him, with Hogan allegedly blaming the mistake on using cocaine before the match). Savage reached Hogan at home two weeks earlier and Hogan denied all allegations of drug use once again and then disconnected his telephone the next day. The story quoted both Gillette, which uses Hogan to endorse Right Guard and Solaris Marketing Group Inc., which distributes Hulk Hogan Vitamins for children, as saying they weren't canceling their projects. Orton was quoted in this story as saying, "Every time Hulk came into Las Vegas he would call me up looking for some blow (cocaine). A couple of years ago he bought an eight-ball (an eighth of an ounce) and did all of it in his hotel room after the show."

Friends of Hogan are telling the Observer that after Wrestlemania, Hogan plans on retiring from wrestling except for the few contracted Japan shots and is moving from the Tampa area to Hawaii to get away from it all.

All of this because he lied on the Arsenio Hall show.

No matter what anyone thinks of Vince McMahon personally, he has to be respected for a great deal of business and marketing acumen. Along the way of building Titan Sports into a company that grosses in excess of \$125 million per year (those \$1.7 billion figures quoted on every media news report and even in very respectable newspapers are ludicrous beyond belief), McMahon has made a lot of enemies. But even his enemies would probably admit that he isn't stupid. Yet, after watching the Larry King Live, I had to shake my head in disbelief. Yes, it's the sexual abuse and sexual harassment that have put the company under fire more than Hogan lying on Arsenio did. But without the lie, the climate wouldn't have been created to give those who want to speak out publicly against McMahon and Titan a forum. Without the media already examining the company because of the steroid issue, nobody would have paid a rat's ass worth of attention to Murray Hodgson. If nothing else, a smart person would learn from their mistakes. Even though dishonesty is an inbred part of any wrestling promoter, one would think McMahon learned something from this debacle.

Instead, throwing caution to the wind, he decided to trade wits with Bruno Sammartino and Barry Orton and play the denial game. Was McMahon so bent on personal satisfaction of a momentary illusory "victory" over two men he hates that he repeated the mistake that put him in the position in the first place? Apparently he was. Certainly whatever credibility of his previous claim that Hogan acted on his own in his decision to tell "the truth but not the complete truth" on Arsenio went right out the window when McMahon did the same thing.

His experience and composure on television in some ways saw him run rings around Sammartino and Orton. But his lack of honesty was so outrageous, that if it was a debate, Sammartino would have won by an early disqualification. Calls to the

Observer generated about 65 percent thinking Sammartino got the better of McMahon. But of the remaining 35 percent thought McMahon completely wiped the studio with Sammartino. Friends who weren't wrestling fans (thus probably not as adept as seeing through McMahon), seemed to score it closer to 55-45 with Sammartino still having the edge. Considering King, who clearly went on the show uninformed about his subject, seemed to favor McMahon and as a host joined McMahon in accusing the accusers, those percentages were surprising since the public generally believes whomever the host sympathizes with.

The going on cold speaks volumes for King professionally since his office staff spent two hours on the phone with me that morning to give King background information. It appeared he didn't bother with that information and instead got stuck on the subject of why nobody had come forward until this point. As a television performance, Orton, who was on via telephone, came off poorly to the point King cut him off midway through the show. Problem with Orton, was he was so worried about having credibility and being completely honest that he explained things in such great detail. For a television show looking for quickie sound bites, that's not how things are done. But this wasn't a debate. The only possible thing McMahon appearing on King would do for Titan Sports would be if he could diffuse the issue. Even for those who thought McMahon ran rings around Sammartino and Orton, let alone the majority who didn't, they would admit when the show was over, the issue was stronger than ever.

Some specific McMahon lies, misleading statements and outright distortions:

*He wasn't given a chance to respond to the various newspaper stories - First off, every newspaper reporting on this contacted McMahon. And he talked to several reporters before their stories but avoided directly answering the significant questions and chose not to talk with others. Hogan, who several stories were written about, wouldn't talk to anyone.

*He never even heard rumors of sexual misconduct in his organization until he read about them in the last two weeks - There is no way he couldn't have heard rumors. One upstate New York radio host who promoted towns for the WWF in 1984-85 phoned me and said he'd heard the specific stories about two of the departed men and was warned by wrestlers about them seven years ago. Maybe McMahon didn't know specifics (more on this point later), although even that seems to be iffy. Probably he knew, but I can accept maybe not. Hodgson first made his charge in September of last year. Jeff Savage of the San Diego Union first contacted Steve Planamenta about the story back on Feb. 9 and called almost every day for a month to get responses that never came back. Savage also phoned Terry Garvin (and spoke a few times with his wife) at home, Mel Phillips (and spoke with Phillips' family but never Phillips) and Pat Patterson (who he did speak with) weeks ago detailing the various allegations and got furious responses and hang-ups with demands never to call back in each case

*Claimed there was never even one allegation of misconduct ever made about any of the parties involved in all their years in wrestling - McMahon admitted, as was reported by Mushnick in his brutal column Wednesday entitled, "WWF's Defense Just More Lies," that Phillips was fired four years ago "because Phillips' relationship with kids seemed peculiar and unnatural." Midget wrestler Lord Littlebrook claimed Sunday he had written a letter to McMahon making a claim against one of the employees who resigned and never heard back from McMahon. Tom Hankins noted on Donahue that after his incident with Patterson he did call to complain to McMahon but never got through.

*McMahon also claimed Phillips had never been an employee of Titan Sports although he had worked as "an occasional laborer" - Technically correct since Phillips, as are all wrestlers, technically not company employees but independent contractors contracted with the company. However, the occasional laborer has been a regular ring announcer for Superstars of Wrestling for some time. In fact, a New Jersey athletic commissioner called John Arezzi's radio show and said that in Phillips' announcers license, he listed the Titan office address as his home address

*Tried to switch the issue by saying that while sexual harassment is prevalent in our society, so is homophobia, to give the idea that there is no truth to these allegations and it is simply gay bashing - There is at least one wrestler who spoke out (who wasn't on the Donahue panel) that I believe simply was gay bashing. However, who, my friends, has done more to teach homophobia to children than Vince McMahon with his gay stereotypical characters, all of whom work as heels, educating youngsters that gay bashing is a positive trait since all their heroic babyfaces do it when matched with an effeminate heel

*Claimed Murray Hodgson's complaint has been legally dropped and that he never worked for the WWF - In fact, while technically the lawsuit is not a sexual harassment lawsuit but a wrongful termination lawsuit, as anyone who saw Donahue knows, Hodgson has hardly dropped the allegation. Hodgson, in fact, is the voice of the WWF on its premiere videotape. Hodgson went on King's radio show later Friday night and claimed that almost every word as it regarded to him that was said earlier on television was a lie

*Said Hulk Hogan never denied using steroids on Arsenio Hall - A totally misleading statement because Hogan issued a complete denial with the exception of taking a therapeutic drug that had a form of a steroid in it

*Said nobody in the WWF is on steroids - While use is clearly down, saying nobody is ridiculous. McMahon didn't learn one thing from the problems created on the Arsenio Hall show because he did almost the exact Hulk Hogan lie. For a guy who wants people to believe that Hogan said what he did on his own and that he wanted Hogan to tell the complete truth, he sure didn't practice what he preached. That particular statement was the most disappointing thing to me about the entire show. For a guy who openly complained about the way Kip Frey's policy was received, maybe he should have read that morning's Atlanta Constitution and realized his own p.r. errors. That paper quoted Johnny B. Badd as saying, "We're really trying to get guys off the gas. We realize now we've made a mistake." Frey was quoted as saying, "We want to send the message that we have athletes who have made the choice not to use steroids. Most of our guys have used them previously." Read that last sentence. No subterfuge. No misdirection. No lies. Just the truth.

*Said he wasn't negotiating a settlement with Tom Cole and called the various charges "bunk" - On Monday, a settlement had already been reached, which according to Alan Fuchsburg, Cole's attorney in Mushnick's Wednesday column in the Post, McMahon will make a full and sincere admission that the sexual misconduct claims made by Cole are true. Of course, if this deal was really struck and McMahon agreed to the admission, both before the Donahue taping, then why didn't McMahon say so on Donahue and admit some of the charges were true? The two sides had begun talks the previous Tuesday although it wasn't until Sunday that McMahon told Cole he believed him, with the Donahue show just one day away. According to Fuchsburg, with tears swelling his eyes McMahon said he, too, was abused as a child, and offered him the job as restitution and saying the offending parties are all history. Fuchsburg was adamant about McMahon being a changed man, however Cole's previous attorney, Tom Pachura said, "Tom Cole has secured the position as the king's pawn. He's the court jester and he doesn't even know it. But if he's happy, that's what you want to do as a lawyer, make your client happy."

But what is the issue? There is no simple issue. Of course there is steroids, pro wrestling's ongoing and never-ending scandal. Use started 20 years ago, but pressure on promotions didn't really start until the Zahorian trial last June. But that's been pushed into the background by the sleaze stories. But the problems of Titan Sports today have largely been created by the dishonesty in regards to the steroid issue. As we wrote just a few weeks ago before this media blitz began, the officials of Titan Sports never fully understood just how much the steroid lies had destroyed the company's credibility. Hopefully, they know now and have learned from it and the company will do an about-face. But as McMahon showed Friday on Larry King, this is a company that has been so inebriated with its marketing success that it doesn't have the capacity to learn from its mistakes. If a few reporters did work to break a similar story on the NFL, whether true or not, the NFL has maintained enough credibility that reporters and the public would believe its spin of

the truth. With McMahon, his quotes in the various newspapers were more for comic relief in between the staggering charges.

Sexual harassment. How prevalent is it? First off, I believe Barry Orton's story about the two incidents that happened back when he was 19 years old. Orton alleges one incident occurred with Garvin, who was then both wrestling and promoting in the West Texas territory, on a six-hour trip from Amarillo to Albuquerque, Garvin started propositioning him over-and-over again. Another time in a car on a road trip he claimed he was in the back seat between Patterson and Garvin and he alleges they were grabbing at him and he ran out of the car. According to his sworn deposition, "It wasn't a like a rape situation. It was more of a teasing type thing. But, you know, they were trying to overpower my will." Orton said when he got out of the car, his pants were all ripped in the crotch area. Orton was so outraged by McMahon denying his stories in regard to the claims about incidents involving Patterson and Garvin that he took a lie detector test based on his deposition in the prospective lawsuit with Tom Cole which detailed the incidents. He passed with flying colors. According to a report prepared by Anthony De Sio, President of Colt Protective Security, Inc. of Las Vegas, "After complete testing and careful analysis of the polygraph charts, this examiner is of the opinion that Mr. Orton was truthful and there were no deceptive reactions to the relevant questions asked." Lie detectors are not close to 100 percent accurate nor are they admissible in court. However, by agreeing to take the test, and making it public to myself and others in the media beforehand (and with one media member present while he took the test), he put himself in the position for his entire credibility to be destroyed as a result of a nervous reaction. The willingness to take the test meant more to me than the actual results.

But those incidents happened in the late 1970s when the two men involved didn't even work for Titan Sports. However, when Orton worked for Titan Sports, they were executives, the booker and his assistant. Did they hold those incidents against him and did that stifle his career? Did they promote others who did favors above him? Those are the two relevant questions. Even Orton only claims one name as a wrestler who did favors. The wrestler was far less talented than Orton and also was only given a minor push, but is still with the organization while Orton was let go. I spoke to one major wrestling personality who had nothing to do with the show but coincidentally was in the city later that night. He rebuked Orton's complaints, said the guy wouldn't have been a main eventer no matter what he did. Then I brought up a comparison with the other wrestler. The question is, do you think Orton not performing sexual favors as compared with someone who allegedly did with less talent, that when the time came, who was given better treatments as far as number of bookings and which of the two was kept and who was let go when crunch time came? The performer agreed in that specific instance Orton had a valid point. However, I myself have a problem with the term casting couch that has been used in the media. That paints a picture that the wrestlers in the WWF perform homosexual acts and sleep their way to the top. It just ain't so.

There were several other instances brought out, including a claim that the WWF stopped booking midget wrestlers because Karate Kid (Chris Duby) didn't accept a sexual advance by one of the departed officials. Maybe true, but when Karate Kid and midget booker Lord Littlebook (Roger Brooks) went through the story, I wasn't convinced. It seemed to me that they were reading something into something that wasn't there. Then again, Duby was very nervous on the air which makes one less believable, but perhaps I was reading dishonesty into something that was just nerves.

Sexual abuse of minors? A totally different and terribly emotionally charged issue. Part of the emotion of this issue is that the alleged incidents involved male-to-male. The fact is, sexual abuse by male wrestlers on females is hardly uncommon although no less legal and seemingly a lot less emotionally charged. If a select few employees of the company were involved in this, and the resignations and the recent agreement with Tom Cole seem to indicate an admission of this, how much should the owner of the company and the company itself be held responsible? I have a lot of mixed feelings here. First off, I know Vince McMahon and Pat Patterson and have talked with both frequently. I haven't talked with Terry Garvin in years, but used to talk with him at least once a week years back. I don't know Mel Phillips at all. It's one thing to think they put together a PPV show that wasn't very

good. It's even one thing to sometimes, or even often, disagree with their business ethics. It's a totally different thing to try and ruin someone's life or their business. If the stories weren't completely convincing, the damage toll created with a false accusation was too much. But there were just too many stories and too many corroborations, particularly in such a closed business. Here is my feeling. If these were isolated incidents, or maybe not even isolated, unbeknownst to McMahon, and they are true, and the offending parties are truly history, then it's over and done with. If McMahon knew about them all along and did nothing, and it can be proven, his should have a lot of explaining to do. If he had something to do with overtly covering up previous incidents and it comes out, they're finished. Knowing the way the wrestling business operates, nothing is out of the question. But getting enough evidence to print the truth isn't always easy. I can't buy for a second that McMahon had never even heard rumors since they were fairly prevalent in the business. But in his defense, it would be a horrible company and a horrible society if someone could be fired just because someone started a bad rumor about them. If he heard a rumor but had no significant evidence and did nothing, the president of the company is not to blame. Yes, Vince McMahon is dishonest and if lying was a crime, he'd be serving seven life terms. But lying isn't a crime.

If McMahon's reputation was one of honesty, he could pull it off here and people would believe him. If he had said he had heard rumors but you can't fire someone on rumors, even with his reputation, that would be a believable story. But never heard even one rumor?

Same thing with the steroid problem. While I don't discount outright arrogance, one would think McMahon right now wouldn't want wrestlers who look juiced to the gills around. They are a magnet for negative publicity. But, let's use Chris Walker as an example. Let's say McMahon was truly serious about cracking down on steroids and fired him because he sure does look like he's on steroids. Even if he is on steroids, but learned to beat the test, if a wrongful termination suit went to court, and lord only knows how many of them are out there right now, Walker would win without the proof of a positive test. One Titan employee admitted to me just how afraid McMahon is right now of firing anyone, because a fired employee who was po'd and knows a few skeletons could be devastating in the media, let alone in a courtroom. Titan has to be court-room shy right now anyway since this past week a Wisconsin jury awarded a \$100,000 judgement to a former small-time wrestler/promoter Albert Patterson since he owned the trademark to the name "Superstars of Wrestling" in the state of Wisconsin. Patterson promoted small-time wrestling and trademarked the name back in 1979.

Friday night was also supposed to be the 20/20 segment on steroids in sports, with some focus being put on Hulk Hogan and pro wrestling. The segment didn't air amidst all the mass media pressure. The segment hasn't been canned, nor does it have a scheduled air date although it is assumed it'll run in about 30 days.

This brings us to the Phil Donahue show on Monday. I was asked on Thursday that if they were going to do a show, would I be interested in being a guest. I said I wasn't the guy for a show on sexual abuse because I hadn't worked hard enough on the story but said if they wanted to do something on pro wrestling in general or steroids in pro wrestling I'd be interested. On Friday, they told me the segment was a definite for Monday and they wanted me on so I agreed. The only names I knew of that were going to be guests were John Arezzi, Bruno Sammartino, Orton and Hankins. Later that day I learned that Billy Graham and David Shults had been invited and that Titan rejected an invitation to send either McMahon or a spokesperson. Monday morning I received a phone call telling me that McMahon's office was furious about the show because they claimed every guest but one wasn't credible (me supposedly being the one) and they were at a complete loss in regard to Hankins because they knew nothing about him (ie, no dirt for comebacks to throw him off). Later that morning I was told McMahon had agreed to appear provided the show agreed to a few stipulations: 1) 12 spots in the studio audience for "plants" (in order to try and sway the crowd live and at home with audience reactions favorable to McMahon); 2) McMahon would get to open the two with a two minute uninterrupted speech; 3) He wouldn't go on alone and would bring two guests, a doctor (for credibility if steroids came up) and a lawyer (for credibility on legal issues);

4) That David Shults be bounced from the show. They wouldn't agree to any of the stipulations, although later compromised and agreed only to the fourth one. But at that point, it was obvious McMahon would be there because he wouldn't have made demands unless he had already decided to appear. I didn't know for sure that McMahon was going to appear until an hour before showtime, nor about Murray Hodgson.

Behind the scenes were fascinating. Hodgson knew nobody but was anxious for the show to get underway. Orton seemed kind of nervous because he wanted to improve on his performance on Friday. Sammartino was frustrated with McMahon's lies on Friday and was begging everyone to make sure McMahon wasn't allowed to sit next to him because he was afraid of his temper. Graham seemed to feel the same way. I was pacing, literally scared out of my mind since I'm not a television personality and almost everyone else was.

About ten minutes before show time, Donahue came into the Green Room (waiting room for guests) and all the guests present were in one room. The tension was incredible in the room when McMahon walked in. I don't know if I've ever been in a room where an aura of mutual hatred so filled the air. I believe I was the only one who even acknowledged McMahon and I don't think he made eye contact with anyone else in the room, nor visa versa.

Show time came. McMahon threw the first pitch--the old change-up. Instead of indignance at the charges, it was a new strategy, remorse, understanding, trying just to learn. Clearly, going on the offensive against those who were making allegations about his company on Larry King, while it may have been personally satisfying to those who led him to believe he trounced Bruno, was from a corporate standpoint a bad decision. It only heated the issue. To diffuse the issue there was only one way to go. McMahon was going to have to do a job on television. Sit back and take the lumps and possibly wind up as a babyface at the end because the intensity of some of the guests would be such that it could turn into overkill. From a television and excitement standpoint, the high point of the show was in the opening segment, McMahon going one-on-one with Hodgson. My feeling in retrospect is that there were two people McMahon personally wasn't going to lay down for--Hodgson and Graham. I don't know if Hodgson was honest or not, but he either blitzed McMahon with a well prepared truthful offensive, or simply out-McMahoned McMahon. Hodgson claimed he was fired because he wouldn't sleep with the Vice President. McMahon claimed he was fired because he was a terrible announcer, he couldn't make the transition from radio-to-television. Hodgson made that statement look ridiculous within 30 seconds as he dismantled McMahon with the poise of a 20-year television veteran that even McMahon couldn't match. When McMahon claimed Hodgson's lawyers wanted \$160,000 this morning or he'd go on the air, it was clearly last-ditch desperation. When Hodgson denied it and said that ever since he made his charge, McMahon has been trying to buy him out, it resulted in a near standing ovation. Orton and Hankins made their charges, both sounding believable with McMahon really not even trying an offensive against either one.

At that point, the rest of the guests, myself included came on. The show never reached that emotional peak again, although Graham and McMahon got pretty heated at one point. It clearly looked like it was everyone against one person, which would have created some sympathy for McMahon, although the live audience didn't buy his attempts at sincerity. He was clearly the heel and his lack of honesty was pretty well exposed for the entire nation to see. He may not have been the only heel on the show, though. Still, as a television personality, he weathered the storm very well all things considered. Even when Graham got out of control to the point McMahon started getting some sympathy, the crowd still popped for Graham's ranting. The show was over too soon. It accomplished very little. Donahue was a super host. His producers had done their homework and unlike King, he was active and thought provoking and wasn't afraid to put anyone on the spot. If there was a negative, I sensed from the audience that the feeling was that no matter how shocking the story, how heinous the situation, that as long as it involved wrestling, to some people, it just didn't matter because as one girl in the audience said, "it's so sleazy and so gross anyway."

Maybe so. If there is one thing hopefully learned by what took place this week, it is that dishonesty catches up to people in the

long run. The results when exposed, from a p.r. standpoint, make the short-term gains from the con seem like nothing. McMahon had gone through personal hell. He seemed to have aged six-to-eight years since the last time I had seen him live, which was only a few months back. Hey, everyone involved in the story had gone through a personal hell. Chris Loss, one of the kids who corroborated Cole's story, by the end of last week had underwent so much media pressure that he didn't want to talk to anyone else and just wanted to get on with his life. McMahon's newspaper quotes about how this hasn't even affected anything nor would it may cover things on the surface, but the reality was a whole lot different. He'd spent nine years creating an empire and had pretty much autonomous control of his industry. He did what he wanted, when he wanted and to who he wanted. Ethics, honesty, even laws, they were for someone else to follow. He didn't always win, but even the losses were usually only minor inconveniences. But this time, right in the midst of some of the strongest business he's done in a long time, the whole thing was in jeopardy. Not a bad PPV buy rate. Not an angle that didn't play well and some weak houses. Not a short-term cash flow problem. The whole thing.

In Wednesday morning's Post, Mushnick wrote the single most damaging article ever in a mainstream publication. A giant back-page headline with a photo of McMahon wrote: "Sex, Lies and the WWF," with the sub-title, "McMahon bought way out of sex suit." The story on the inside was headlined, "WWF's defense, just more lies." Let's quote Mushnick: "Never will you encounter a human being more cold-blooded, more devoid of humor and propriety than Vince McMahon, America's foremost TV babysitter. In your wildest, most twisted dreams, you won't meet up with the likes of McMahon, a miscreant so practiced in the art of deception, the half-truth and the bald-faced lie as to make the Artful Dodger appear clumsy. A George Steinbrenner or a Don King pale by comparison. So help us. Indeed, Hannibal Lecter (the cannibal in the movie Silence of the Lambs) is the only fictional character who comes close." Don't kid yourself, nobody, and I mean nobody wants to have a morning paper brought to him and read things like this about himself. McMahon's personal reputation had dropped so low that the joke around New York radio the next day was that the estate of Hannibal Lecter was going to sue the Post for defamation of character because they compared him with McMahon. It's even worse knowing that millions of people on the subways are reading and believing every word of it. Mushnick called McMahon's performance on Larry King, "30 minutes worth of indignation and unblinking lies."

The wrestling business has to come to grips with the fact that it's 1992. The negatives of Titan Sports are simply too much in the public eye right now. For his own self interest and to avoid future explosive situations with wrestlers, McMahon himself should advocate his wrestlers joining an already-existing independent union like SAG. Yes, this will usurp his own autonomous power in a major way. But there will be a standard procedure for grievances. The wrestlers who have the grievances won't be afraid to pursue a remedy for fear that they'll be terminated for rocking the boat. McMahon has to encourage everyone who has a legitimate problem to go to a legitimate outside source without fearing for their position. Yes, knowing wrestlers, there will be those who will try to use this as another con and some who will be sincere, but the avenue needs to be there. But part of the problem is the entire mind-set of the business. There is such a fear of the truth within wrestling that many wrestlers have looked the other way for years at genuine criminal activity because of the fear that it might hurt the business. It's like the far too many wrestling people I've encountered when the subject of the abuse comes out who respond something like, "but we've got a \$130,000 advance at the Garden for next Monday" as if somehow the fact that business is good justifies that nothing bad has really happened. When Bruiser Brody died in 1988 in Puerto Rico, the immediate reaction of the wrestlers in the dressing room who witnessed the incident was to not go to the authorities because if they testified against their booker that they'd lose their job. One or two wrestlers had to talk a few of the Americans to go. A murder was committed, but they were more concerned about protecting the business and the jobs. At the trial, the wrestlers who did testify all lived in Puerto Rico with there was only one major promotion running and the man on trial owned 25 percent of the company they worked for. You figure it out.

All owners hate unions because they become an outside power force to deal with. But an atmosphere like we have in the

present is even worse. Perhaps the worst thing about the business as viewed from an outsider, the thing that makes it the rottenest to the core, is the no-snitch mentality. I understand the present system but the general public never will and inevitably they will find out. But think about it, the present system is horrible if it allows these kind of abuses to go on without anyone saying anything. Over the long-haul, the entire business will become so disreputable with continuing stories such as we've just had that no major corporation would want its name associated with it. What happened this week should be viewed as the greatest thing, although a painful thing, for the WWF and the entire wrestling business. That is, if they learn from their mistakes. After the show was over, McMahon indicated to me that what happened was the best thing for all concerned. But was that just another work? If he had told the truth on Larry King from start-to-finish, I'd have believed him. If nothing else, one has to think McMahon would never tolerate sexual abuse of minors in his organization ever again. The stakes are too high now and a repeat of this week would be deadly. Even a skeptic should at least accept the last point and if that's the case, then something positive was accomplished. But my read on the big picture is that this is a company with a mindset so deep in the either you are with us or you are our enemy philosophy that they didn't learn a thing. That attitude, if it doesn't change, will be the achilles heel that will inevitably destroy the company, even if it really was as big as the media tried this past week to portray it as.

If the attitude has changed, I suggest Titan send apologies to the various reporters, Jeff Savage and Phil Mushnick in particular, who alerted the country and if we are to believe Titan Sports, the company itself to these problems despite the company so vehemently denying them to the point of threatening legal action. I suggest Titan adopt a new p.r. attitude that they are an honest company and can afford to tell the truth no matter how damaging. At least then they'll have credibility in the crunch, something they badly lack. I suggest McMahon explain to the boys that whatever the mores of the business were in 1991, that the entire business is different now. It's time to be honest with the media and with the public. Yes, pro wrestling is entertainment, a show, and those admissions don't damage the business in 1992 one iota. There are problems, steroids, drug abuse, no business is perfect. Pushes will no longer be based on muscularity. The schedule will be eased up so as to not encourage uppers and downers. The big stars won't be allowed to get "clean jobbers" do their urine tests for them anymore if they've just done a coke run. And admit that with 50 or 60 wrestlers, not all are going to be model citizens and instead of the company trying to hide the problems, admit when there is a problem. Admit that much of what the detractors have said is actually the truth, and deny what isn't. And guess what, then people will believe it. The saddest thing about this week from my perspective was that Titan put itself in a position to become sitting ducks for almost any charge imaginable, because no matter who said anything, no matter what their background, the person would still have more credibility than Titan Sports. We live in a society that will allow tremendous leeway in making mistakes to people who are being honest. Make admitting any problems and asking for time to correct them and making a sincere effort to do so a new company policy. I also believe nothing will change and nobody will learn anything from past mistakes. If I'm correct, don't kid yourself by the houses over this past weekend, Titan Sports is in a lot of trouble.

Jim Crockett was fired earlier this week from World Championship Wrestling. Because we've been on the road, details of the firing aren't known at press time. Crockett, former owner of Jim Crockett Promotions that sold out to Turner Broadcasting in late 1988 and became WCW, apparently had philosophical differences with booker Dusty Rhodes and was bounced.

This is the second issue of the current four-issue set. If you've got a (1) on your address label it means that your Observer subscription will expire in two more weeks. Renewal rates remain \$6 for four issues, \$12 for eight, \$24 for 16, \$36 for 24, \$48 for 32 up to \$60 for 40 issues within the United States, Canada and Mexico. Rates for overseas airmail subscriptions are \$9 for each set of four issues up through \$90 for 40 issues. All subscription renewals, letters to the editor, match reports and all other correspondence to the Wrestling Observer Newsletter, P.O. Box 1228, Campbell, CA 95009-1228.

Fax messages to the Observer can be sent after Noon Eastern time (9 a.m. Pacific) on a daily basis to 408-378-6562.

EMLL

Ultimate Dragon (Yoshihiro Asai) will move from middleweight to light heavyweight and begin challenging Lizmark for the NWA title and Jerry Estrada for the CMLL title. Dragon-Lizmark would be a face vs. face encounter and the feud should start in May.

Bestia Salvaje had a hair vs. hair match with Kato Kung Lee this past Friday which headlines this coming Sunday's Galavision card from Arena Mexico. . . SWS wrestlers Masao Orihara (he of the famous moonsault off the top rope to the floor move) and Toshiyuki Nakahara debuted here under the names Iga and Koga, a tag team, on 3/7.

3/6 at Arena Mexico in Mexico City saw Ciclon Ramirez & America (formerly Pantera II) beat Gran Sheik (Arias Romero) & Felino (Baby Casas) in two straight falls, second fall via count out *1/2, Octagon & Ultimate Dragon & Kato Kung Lee beat Salvaje & Javier Cruz & Blue Panther in two straight falls in 16:39 when Lee pinned Panther. ***3/4, Salomon Grundy & Aaron Grundy (Mike Shaw) & Lizmark beat Nitron & Pirata Morgan & El Satanico in 18:12 when Satanico was counted out of the ring after Lizmark hit him with a dive through the ropes ** and the main event saw Cien Caras & Sangre Chicana & Mascara Ano 2000 beat Conan & Perro Aguayo & Rayo de Jalisco Jr in two straight falls in 19:53. An incredible brawl ****1/4.

The big show on 3/15 in Monterrey saw Cien Caras keep the CMLL heavyweight title beating Canadian Vampire Casanova via count out when Chicana threw Caras into the ring behind the refs back and he saw Caras in the ring and awarded him the bout when Vampire didn't beat the count.

CMLL will hold a tournament to determine the first world women's champion starting 3/27 at Arena Mexico with Yumiko Hotta and Akira Hokuto from Japan coming in for the tournament.

Fuerza Guerrera's son debuted on 3/15 in Tecozaulta using the ring name Fuerza Gimm.

UWA

The trio called The Canadian Express (Buffalo Allen aka Badnews Allen, DNS Furnas aka Doug Furnas and Phil Lason aka Dan Kroffat) headlined all the major cards this past week. Kroffat & Furnas were apparently a huge hit particularly in the Mexico City area even though they worked in a heel role because of their Japanese style moves. On 3/12 in Mexico City at Arena Pista Revolucion, Lason & Furnas headlined against Mil Mascaras & Canek; on 3/13 in Netzahualcoyotl saw the Canadian Express vs. Mascaras & Canek & Villano III and on 3/14 in Cuernavaca the Express headlined against Los Villanos.

Mascaras has been a huge drawing card in Mexico City while most of the top UWA names are touring Japan and will remain as a regular until the end of the month.

The wrestlers strike which was headline news here a few months back was officially settled this past week. On Thursday, 3/12, representatives of the EMLL and UWA and the wrestlers union syndicate along with arena promoters got together and signed agreements that television cameras would be allowed in certain arenas (Arena Coliseo and Arena Mexico for EMLL and El Toreo, Netzahualcoyotl and Queretaro for UWA) in return for financial guarantees to the wrestlers and the union. In return, the union promised not to strike. On the UWA television show that aired on 2/22 there was apparently a ****1/4 match with Canadian Tiger & Dr. Wagner Jr. & Negro Casas vs. Silver King & El Texano & Gran Hamada.

3/15 at El Toreo in Naucalpan saw The Canadian Express win 2/3 falls from Villano IV & V & Enrique Vera. Dos Caras & Villano III were originally scheduled to team with Vera in the main event but their plane arriving back from Japan was delayed so they missed the show. Allen pinned Vera with a low blow in the third fall. Also Fantasma & Solar I & El Coloso beat Rambo & Kahos I & Fishman via DQ, Villano I & El Magnetico & El Sicodelico beat Shu El Guerrero & Lobo Rubio & El Hijo

del Diablo and American Eagle #1 (Danny Davis) & Baby Face & El Engendro beat Celestial & Halcon 78 & Gran Apache.

GLOBAL

Rumors abound that this group is in some trouble since Craig Johnson was dumped as television announcer in a cost-cutting measure and there are a lot of reports elsewhere that I won't get into that indicate more of the same.

Terry Garvin changed his ring name this week to Terry Simms, which is his real name. He said he had returned from a trip to Louisville, his home town, and when he spoke at his daughter's school the kids were confused how his daughter Amanda Simms could be the daughter of Terry Garvin. Considering the plight of the other Terry Garvin, that story sounds like a work and that he just didn't feel like having the ring name Terry Garvin right now.

3/13 show at the Dallas Sportatorium drew 450 fans as for 4/6 ESPN air date--Sam Houston beat Black Bart via DQ when Bart pulled the ref into Houston's way, California Connection (John Tatum & Rod Price) beat Scott Putski & Gary Young via DQ in a two-of-three fall match when Putski pinned Tatum with a Polish hammer but manager Mr. Akbar threw a foreign object into the ring and as it was on the mat, showed the ref who saw it and he reversed the decision and Dark Patriot (Doug Gilbert) pinned Simms when Bruce Prichard hit him with a shoe. For 4/8 ESPN air date--Dark Patriot pinned Rick Garren, The Viper (Mike Davis) pinned Chaz and Simms won a 15 man Battle Royal. Finish saw Prichard on the ring apron holding Simms. Ref James Beard was trying to pull Prichard down. When Dark Patriot went after Simms, Beard pulled Prichard's sweats down. Prichard got unnerved and let go of Simms, who ducked and Dark Patriot went over the top rope. After the match Dark Patriot, Big Bad John and Prichard triple-teamed ref Beard until Simms made the save. Joe Pedicino then announced he wasn't going to fine Prichard and his group for the actions but instead was suspending them. Beard and Simms begged Pedicino not to suspend them because they wanted revenge (I can just picture this angle in the WMC studio). It leads to next week's six-man tag match with Beard & Simms & Eddie Gilbert vs. Dark Patriot & The Viper & Prichard. For 4/13 ESPN saw Bart double count out Bill Irwin in a Brass Knux title match, Viper & Steven Dane DDQ Putski & Young, Tatum & Price beat Jeff Grettler & Rick Garren and Eddie Gilbert beat Big Bad John in a hair vs. hair match so John got his head shaved.

Lots of talk of Terry Funk coming in for a few shots along with the tag team of The Blazers from Georgia (Sugar Ray Lloyd & R.D. Swain) and The Ebony Experience (two black wrestlers trained by Ivan Putski out of Houston).

3/20 at the Sportatorium has Giant Warrior (Butch Masters) vs. Big Bad John in a bodyslam challenge, Barry Horowitz vs. Danny Davis for the lighthweight title, Dark Patriot & Viper & Prichard vs. Eddie Gilbert & Simms & Beard, Tatum & Price vs. Young & Putski with the GWF tag team titles up against the hair and Big Bertha Young (Gary Young in drag) & Irwin vs. Bart & Akbar.

Ref Sam Esposito (Sam Lowe) is pretty well now established as a heel ref.

JAPAN

Television ratings last weekend saw New Japan headlined by Riki Choshu & Kengo Kimura vs. Antonio Inoki & Osamu Kido draw an 8.7 and a 7.0 while All Japan headlined by Jumbo Tsuruta & Akira Taue winning the tag team titles from Steve Williams & Terry Gordy drew a 5.7 and a 5.2.

New Japan held a television taping before a sellout 8,900 fans in Kyoto on 3/9 as Jushin Liger retained his IWGP junior heavyweight title pinning Mad Bull Buster Rex, Bam Bam Bigelow & Big Van Vader retained the IWGP tag team titles beating Masa Chono & Shinya Hashimoto in 25:08 when Bigelow pinned Chono, Super Strong Machine & Tatsutoshi Goto & Hiro Saito beat Riki Choshu & Takayuki Iizuka & El Samurai (Osamu Matsuda) when Machine pinned Iizuka with a diving head-butt and Shiro Koshinaka & Kuniaki Kobayashi beat karate guys Akitoshi Saito & Masashi Aoyagi. At 6:39 the ref stopped the match ruling Saito too bloody to continue, but Aoyagi grabbed student Keigo Kuruhara and they re-started the match with Kobayashi making Kuruhara submit in 1:12.

Universal has a 4/19 show at Tokyo's Korakuen Hall booked with no foreign talent.

All Japan's Champion Carnival tour will consist of two round-robin tournaments. Tournament A has Jumbo Tsuruta, Mitsuharu Misawa, Masa Fuchi, Tsuyoshi Kikuchi, Terry Gordy, Johnny Ace, Doug Furnas, Joel Deaton, Giant Kimala II and Master Blaster (Al Greene). Tournament B has Akira Taue, Toshiaki Kawada, Kenta Kobashi, Yoshinari Ogawa, Stan Hansen, Steve Williams, Dan Kroffat, Billy Black, Dan Spivey and David Isley. Everyone in each tournament wrestles each other and the two guys with the best win-loss record meet for the tournament championship.

FMW announced shows on 5/15 in Tijuana and 5/16 in Los Angeles.

FMW on 3/25 at Korakuen Hall has a WWA World Martial Arts title match with Tarzan Goto vs. Leon Spinks.

UWFI on 3/17 in Nagoya headlined by Kazuo Yamazaki vs. Gary Allbright and Nobuhiko Takada vs. Steve Day (231-pound U.S. Olympic team amateur wrestler). Koji Kitao signed with UWFI and retired wrestling legend Billy Robinson will appear in an exhibition match in May.

USWA

Only news is results from 3/17 in Louisville before 1,300 fans in Louisville (largest crowd in a LONG time mainly to see the return of Jimmy Valiant) as Tony Falk pinned Cat Man, Brian Christopher beat Pat Tanaka via DQ, Dr. Death won the Southern title from Tom Prichard when Dr. Death got the bed pan off the pole to win, Miss Texas beat Nurse Kratchett via DQ when Dr. Death interfered, Tanaka beat Eric Embry via DQ when Tony Falk interfered and Tony Anthony made the save, Jerry Lawler & Jimmy Valiant & Prichard beat Moondogs & Richard Lee via DQ when Black Dog interfered.

Jeff Jarrett still out with a back injury.

ASSORTED NOTES

Paul Roma's boxing debut was less than successful, a fourth round KO loss to Jerry Arentzen when manager Kevin Rooney threw in the towel on 3/6.

Cauliflower Alley Banquet takes place on Saturday.

Gene Kiniski, the former world champion from the 1960s, really did come out of retirement for a WFWA television taping match in Winnipeg a few weeks back. By our records, Kiniski would be 66 years old.

3/13 in Eugene, OR drew 90 as Ron Harris drew C.W. Bergstrom 1/2*, Mike Winner beat Don Harris via DQ *1/2 (Winner has a bad knee legit), Steve Doll pinned Buddy Rose to keep the Northwest title ** and Bart Sawyer & Brickhouse Brown beat Al Madril & Mike Miller via DQ * and Winner won a Battle Royal 1/2*.

More indie news next week.

Former Los Angeles wrestling promoter Mike LeBelle is recuperating from a recent stroke.

The real Karate Kid (Ralph Maccio, who starred in a hit movie of the same name) is said to be furious when he found out this week watching Donahue that there was a midget wrestler using the name, particularly since the publicity isn't exactly favorable.

WCW

3/12 in Camp Lejuene, NC drew 1,800 as Mr. Hughes pinned P.N. News, Vinnie Vegas pinned Big Josh, Abdullah the Butcher DDQ Cactus Jack, Rick & Scott Steiner beat Bobby Eaton & Steve Austin (pretty good match), Johnny B. Badd pinned Terrence Taylor, Sting & Ron Simmons beat Rick Rude & Larry Zbyszko.

El Gigante still hasn't returned from Argentina after his mother's funeral.

Latest reports have the SuperBrawl PPV hitting at about an 0.6 buy rate which is far and away the lowest for any WCW major PPV event.

3/13 in Fort Bragg drew a sellout 3,350 as Taylor pinned News, Vegas pinned Josh when Hughes interfered, Abdullah DCOR Cactus Jack, Steiners beat Eaton & Austin when Scott pinned Eaton with an incredible Frankensteiner, Badd pinned Morton and Sting & Simmons beat Rude & Zbyszko.

3/15 in Winston-Salem, NC drew 1,500 as Taylor pinned Marcus Bagwell **1/2, Van Hammer pinned Diamond Dallas Page DUD, Badd pinned Cactus Jack ***1/2, Simmons & Josh beat Hughes & Vegas **1/2, Steiners & Steamboat & Rhodes beat Anderson & Eaton & Zbyszko & Austin & Dangerously in a 8 1/2 man tag team match when Steamboat pinned Zbyszko **** and Sting cradled Rude **1/2.

For WCW taping that airs this coming weekend from Center Stage, highlights include Taylor & Valentine over News & Junkfood Dog via the Dusty finish, Dallas Page tries to do an interview but Doug Dillinger runs him off since he's banned from doing interviews and Steiners beat Zbyszko & Eaton when Rick pinned Zbyszko. Madusa challenged Missy Hyatt over who is the first lady of WCW. For 3/28, Patriots returned and looked worse than ever, Zenk pinned Taylor with Valentine and Bagwell both interfering afterwards, Badd pinned Steve Armstrong, Anderson & Eaton & Austin beat JFD & Brad Armstrong & News and Rude pinned Bagwell with Steamboat doing a post-match run-in.

Jake Roberts was backstage during the taping.

Scott Anthony said to be coming in using the ring name Scotty Flamingo.

Kevin Sullivan's return seems to have been nixed.

WWF

Reba McIntyre was announced as a celebrity guest for Wrestlemania.

It's rumored that on television the week before Wrestlemania, Hogan will announce it's his last match and they'll do a tribute to him on television.

Kevin Kelly is coming in under the name The Convict for a feud with Big Bossman.

3/14 in Anaheim before 9,600 fans saw Chris Walker pin Skinner 1/2*, Repo Man pinned Jim Brunzell *3/4, Nasty Boys beat Bushwhackers *, Randy Savage won an 18 man Battle Royal, Crush double count out Warlord -*, British Bulldog pinned Rick Martel *3/4 and Bret Hart beat Mountie 3/4*.

3/15 in San Diego drew 5,800 as Warlord pinned Walker **1/4, Repo Man pinned Virgil DUD, Bulldog pinned Martel **, Bret Hart & Bushwhackers beat Nasty Boys & Mountie 1/2*, IRS pinned Brunzell -*, Crush pinned Skinner -3/4* and Hulk Hogan & Roddy Piper beat Ric Flair & Sid Justice when Hogan pinned Flair **1/4.

The same basic crew drew a whopping \$169,000 house (13,000 paid) in Oakland for a 3/15 matinee show which is the largest house in the Bay Area in a few years, even topping the first Hogan-Flair match late October.

I believe every show but one at the post-Wrestlemania European tour is already sold out.

Piper will remain with WWF as a television personality doing Piper's Pits after WM but won't work house shows anymore.

Elizabeth was in the studio audience at the Donahue show.

There was talk of Randy Savage leaving after Wrestlemania as well, but everything appears to be settled in regards to him staying.

McMahon finally admitted between commercial breaks that the steroid test can be beaten.

WWF is holding a steroid seminar in New York in a few weeks.

THE READERS PAGES

Brian Berkon of 710 Summerly Dr., Nashville, TN 37209 is selling USWA photos.

Jim Merchetta Jr. of 107 Cheryl Ave., Mingo Junction, OH 43938 is looking for a tape of SuperBrawl II and the 2/18 issue of The Globe.

Mike Wood has two 11th row ringside tickets for WrestleMania and is willing to take the best offer. He can be reached at 916-922-7643.

Tony Valotta of 115 Arden Dr., Glenshaw, PA 15116 is looking for a tape of the Hulk Hogan vs. Ric Flair matches from Madison Square Garden.

Scott Williams of HMM-166 (C) S-4, UIC 41028, FPO AP 96611-1028 would like tapes of Ric Flair, Bruiser Brody, Terry Funk, Stan Hansen and Abdullah the Butcher. He's now stationed once again in the Persian Gulf.

Carlie Gill of 1851 Falcon Circle, Anchorage, AK 99504 is looking for a regular supplier of Smoky Mountain Wrestling and videos of Michael Hayes and Terry Gordy from the 70s in Tennessee and the copy of the Wrestling Observer which covered Terry Gordy's illness in Japan.

Roger Calvert of 164 Browns Ford Rd., Scottsville, KY 42164 is looking for a tape of the British Bulldogs vs. Rock & Roll Express match.

Russ Cress of 787 Andover Rd., Union, NJ 07083 has tapes of Jesse Ventura on the Ed Coleman and Dave Samms sports talk show and will trade them.

Deborah Stoehr of 5320 N. Central Ave., Indianapolis, IN 46220 is looking for tapes of The Ultimate Warrior on Regis & Kathy Lee, Arsenio Hall and the Phil Collins special and the WWF video on Warrior and the Bret Hart WWF Spotlight special issue as well as LJM dolls of The Hart Foundation and back issues of the Wrestling Observer Yearbooks.

SEX SCANDAL

Vince McMahon's denying of sexual charges against Pat Patterson and Terry Garvin is a laugh. Anyone seriously involved in the wrestling business knows only too well of both Patterson and Garvin's well-earned reputations. McMahon's calling Barry Orton's charges ridiculous and unfounded is just too much for me to take and remain silent. Orton did nothing more than tell the truth. Perhaps if I was still involved in wrestling, I wouldn't be writing you this letter. I'd like to think otherwise. But since I'm retired, I'm not even thinking twice about writing you. I first started in the business in 1973 working for Nick Gulas out of Nashville. I was warned by Jack Donovan, Sam Bass and others about Terry Garvin from day one. At first I thought that they were ribbing me. But it only took Terry a few days to approach me in the same manner he did Orton, with my answer to him being the same as Barry's.

In early 1985, one night in Los Angeles after the WWF had run a show at the Sports Arena, I happened to be at the University Hilton Hotel, sitting at a bar drinking with Pat Patterson, Andre the Giant, Jerry Graham and Mike LeBelle. I was seated between Andre and Pat. After about an hour, I asked Patterson about giving me a shot at doing TV jobs for them. He told me in no uncertain terms that there was only one way that I was ever going to work for them, and that was by having sexual relations with him that very night. Pat was pretty drunk at this point and he was spouting off rather loudly about his fondness for oral sex with other males and asking me if that made him a bad guy. I told him that I felt he was free to do as he pleased, but that I definitely wasn't interested in being a participant. He responded by reiterating that I would never work for the WWF in that case. He kept his word. He even went so far as to throw me out of the dressing room at subsequent shows although I had always been allowed free access up until that point, even though I hadn't been working for them.

Based upon my experience, I cannot help but feel that this was typical behavior for Patterson. Yes, he was an outstanding worker in the ring, but his business and personal ethics suck. He more than deserved to take this fall. I'm just surprised that it didn't happen sooner. If everyone who has experienced this same situation were to come forward and speak out, I think everyone would be shocked at just how many instances like this there were.

*Tom Hankins
Sepulveda, California*

DM: This was the letter Tom, who I should point out I had never met nor spoken with previously, wrote me on 3/8 that led to his appearance on the Donahue show Monday. Hankins did try and report this incident to Vince McMahon but nobody at Titan ever returned his calls.

STEROIDS

Just a few thoughts on the steroid subject from a personal stance. This past week, for the first time ever, I watched somebody get a shot full of what supposedly was testosterone in the ass. This guy is a young wrestler in our area and this was his first dose of the stuff. I had actually thought he'd been on the juice for a while because he has an impressive physique. I probably would have thought he was lying about this being his first shot if he wasn't behaving so nervously and asking, "Is this stuff really okay for me?" type questions to the guy giving him the juice. The reason I refer to the stuff as supposedly being testosterone is because the guy administering the shot was not another wrestler, definitely not a doctor, but a friend of a friend of a friend who was selling what he claimed to be testosterone.

I personally hate what's happened with the steroid craze. However, what bothered me the most about this incident was just how little the wrestler knew about what he was doing. I'm not a biochemist and am definitely no expert on steroids, but I was still shocked at just how little this guy knew about the very stuff he had just had injected into his body. He knew nothing about the issues discussed in the Observer. He knew nothing about the Zahorian case. He didn't even know whether the drugs he was using were legal or not. He had definitely heard warnings about the dangers of steroids before. Who hasn't? Perhaps the warnings weren't strong enough. And perhaps the warnings were too strong. This reminded me of my dope smoking days, especially in regard to why I started getting high when I was a teenager. At that time, the "Just say No" messages consisted of extremely slanted and melodramatic portrayals of crazed teenagers losing their sanity after catching a whiff of the evil weed. People like myself felt insulted that adults expected us to believe this propaganda, so what did we do to show them that we didn't buy it? We went to the other extreme and thoughtlessly indulged in all sorts of recreational drugs.

I think the anti-steroid campaigning (I doubt all the magazine shows on television have a selfless concern about the subjects they present) could be in danger of receiving the same response that recreational drugs got in my day. If all we see are the most extreme claims by Superstar Billy Graham and Steve Michalik (Michalik, in fact, practically personifies all the bullshit anti-drug movies I saw in my junior high health class), I think people will start questioning the credibility of the reports. Remember, along with anti-steroid forces in the press, there are pro-steroid messages floating around locker rooms in even greater number.

There is no doubt these pro-steroid messengers are coated with the same peer pressure that is used when people get high for pleasure. The difference between the two seems to be that the pressure to take recreational drugs when I was younger was to be "in" and to get a buzz. The pressure to take steroids is also to be "in" but also in this business, to help get you a job.

I believe that the anti-steroid messages we see in the letters pages to various wrestling newsletters are written from the heart. Like I said, I'm very anti-steroid and am glad that it's a felony to use the stuff. However, if former users are painted too much like heroes and if the detrimental results turn into self-serving propaganda or if the concern is geared only toward the politics of the issue, then who is really being helped in the long run? The kids and young adults being pressured into shooting up? No way.

I'm totally bothered that this young wrestler who started on steroids is so damn naive about what he's doing. I didn't, however, clobber him with a panic stricken "Just say no" slogan. I told him rationally what I do and don't know about steroids and told him he should be careful. I did tell him I hated the stuff. Maybe he'll continue using. Maybe he'll stop. But telling the truth and giving a balanced message is better than shoving blatant scare tactics at people. People usually overcome to fear of scare tactics so the truth is the best thing in the long run.

I think the straight-forward stance you've taken in your steroid discussions. I think by now overblowing it to the right or to the left has made the Wrestling Observer a very educational source not only on steroids in pro wrestling but on steroids in general.

Name withheld by request

What WCW is doing is wrong. When they show clips of former WCW wrestlers in the WWF doing jobs, that is one thing. But to jump on the train that is about to run over Hulk Hogan when they are guilty of the same thing is wrong. It's b.s. Arn Anderson, Brian Pillman, Tom Zenk, and by your own calculations, 50 percent of WCW wrestlers are on the juice. For WCW to parade these guys in front of my kids as examples when they are drug users is a scam. What they are doing now, in my opinion, is 100 times worse than anything Hogan did. The PSA's are just as dishonest and irresponsible as Hogan's appearance on Arsenio Hall. If you, in your position of importance in this business, don't address the scam being pulled by WCW then you too are part of the problem. Hogan is going to take the rap for all of wrestling and for the 80 to 90 percent of the guys who have been using the juice regularly for years. Whether steroids are morally wrong or not is not an issue here. What is wrong is WCW taking advantage of the misfortune of one individual.

Name withheld by request

DM: Both the aforementioned letters are from part-time pro wrestlers. I'm not thrilled by WCW having Arn Anderson, Ricky Steamboat and Brian Pillman do the PSA's that have been airing in the manner they have run either. I'm not sure if it's quite as bad as Hogan in one sense because none of the three, to the best of my knowledge, has ever publicly denied using steroids. But telling someone to say "No" without honestly talking about your own past if you've used the same very drug is hypocritical. I know Pillman has publicly admitted use of steroids and has suffered health problems from them. I don't know what Anderson or Steamboat have said, if anything, on the subject. By doing the PSA's, whatever use of steroids they may have done in private does become open to the public and if they claim to have never used and have used, they are no better than Hogan. I agree with you that anyone who does a "Just say no" to drugs clip really should at least come clean with their own background rather than be like the photos of so many urging kids to "Just say No" if they aren't willing to practice what they preach.

Just finished reading the Los Angeles Times article on 3/12. Hurray! Finally a major media outlet focused an important story on the steroid problem in pro wrestling, and on column one on the front page in one of the largest circulated newspapers in the country. Hats off to everyone involved in the story. Let's get this sport which we all love so much cleaned up from drugs once and for all.

*John Hoven
San Dimas, California*

PHIL DONAHUE SHOW

It's a crime that the steroid and drug abuse and these other sordid activities happened in the WWF. I really like to believe people, but it was obvious by his facial expressions that Vince McMahon was being dishonest on the show and he never really tried to clear the air. Many lives have suffered because of both his ignorance (if that's the case) or his apathy. Maybe he feels that making money is the only important thing in life. I hope he handles these problems promptly and honestly as soon as possible because he is not just ruining his livelihood and that of many of his employees.

*Steve Franklin
Millburn, New Jersey*

As for the Donahue show, I think Vince McMahon presented himself very well. If anything, Barry Orton, Superstar Graham and Bruno Sammartino hurt themselves slightly because they never reported any sexual abuse to the authorities claiming they would have been blackballed and run out of the business. While this may be true, any sexual abuse of minors has to be reported no matter what the consequences. As for McMahon not knowing about any of this, that's ridiculous. But if he would admit he knew about it and did nothing, his company would be

out of business by the end of the week. As long as he runs a clean company from this point forward, the WWF will survive and the entire industry will be the better for it because of all the publicity.

*Mark Cassel
Milford, Connecticut*

DM: From a legal standpoint, sexual abuse can also involve heterosexual sexual encounters with women under 18-years-old. If every case of that involving wrestlers was reported, half the wrestlers would be blackballed for speaking out and the other half would be in jail.

LARRY KING

After watching Vince McMahon on Larry King it became perfectly obvious why he's simply unable to clean up his act. The first time I met Vince was in 1959 at my father's law offices. He tried to convince me that pro wrestling was a shoot even though I told him that already knew who was giving the time cues at the Sunnyside Gardens television tapings on Tuesday nights in New York. He was only about 12 years old at the time. The same age as I was. As long as he thinks there is one fan left that is either dumb enough or young enough left to pull a work, he will remain the same. He's clearly pathological.

*Bob Barnett
Attorney at Law
Santa Monica, California*

After seeing Vince McMahon on Larry King Friday night, here are my impressions. McMahon came off as belligerent, dishonest and well-scripted. I could tell from his face that the situation was taking a major toll on him. Bruno Sammartino came off as angry and having a personal axe to grind. He made a good case, but was overwhelmed by his hatred for McMahon. Vince knew this and played off it well. Barry Orton came off as completely honest but kind of got lost because Larry King was trying to walk all over him. I think Sammartino wasn't the best choice to counter McMahon since his main issue is steroids as opposed to sex scandals and because he dislikes McMahon so much that it drives him away from his intentions. Obviously Vince knew that and probably welcomed the interview because of it.

*Matt Creamer
Oshkosh, Wisconsin*

I just caught Vince McMahon's attempt at damage control on Larry King Live in regards to the Patterson and Garvin story. McMahon's performance was shameless and embarrassing. King was completely out of touch with the subject. One suspects McMahon either doesn't realize the gravity of the situation he's now in or has grossly underestimated it.

*John Williams
Pasadena, California*

Vince McMahon's appearance on Larry King reminded me of a rat trapped in a corner. He was confrontational, evasive and obviously desperate the entire show. He never allowed either Sammartino or Orton to complete a sentence. First he denied that anyone used steroids in the WWF, then he denied knowledge of steroid use, then he reminded Bruno that his son David had used them. If Larry King knew anything about the situation, he's realize how important Pat Patterson was to the organization and he wouldn't have taken Vince's side.

*Vic Stanley
Lafayette, Indiana*

PEOPLE MAGAZINE

Regarding the Hulk Hogan article in the 3/16 issue of People Magazine, I never realized just how little the mainstream populace really understands about the steroid issue. Case in point. My mother read the article and no doubt expected me to be surprised that Hogan had used steroids. I've watched a few PPV events with my mother. She knows all the characters and I'd say her knowledge of wrestling is equivalent to any fan that attends three or four house shows a year. Nonetheless, I never realized that I've never mentioned steroids use among wrestlers

to her nor did I ever mention the steroid issue as it relates to Hulk Hogan to her. I assumed that anyone watching wrestling would know that so many of the physiques, like Hogan's are chemically enhanced. But she never even considered it until reading the magazine because nobody had ever brought it up to her. Hopefully with more of this mainstream media publicity and nation-wide coverage, the whole issue will explode and the business will become juice-free.

*Paul Dizadji
Oak Lawn, Illinois*

ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT

Caught the Entertainment Tonight piece on 3/12 on the WWF sex scandal. They interviewed Vince McMahon who called what has been going on as "locker room horseplay." Welcome back to Earth, Vince. I believe things will become a lot worse before they get better. After a decade of being media darlings thanks to Hulk Hogan, the press has suddenly realized that they've been had and the WWF is going to have hell to pay. As a local TV and radio broadcaster, I know about media types. They are very cynical. When someone is caught in a lie, and lying is second nature to Vince, nobody can bury you faster than the mainstream media. The WWF made a major error in having Hogan lie on the Arsenio Hall show. The sex scandal makes two major scandals in a one year time period. I wish the WWF all the best of luck because they are going to need it.

*Bob Ivy
Starkville, Mississippi*

GRAHAM

I happened to see a copy of your 1/10 Newsletter and read the very interesting interview you did with Wayne Coleman. Whatever may be the accuracy of the rest of his recollections, as near as I can tell he was not, as he claims, the 1961 Teenage Mr. America unless he was going by the name Steve Boyer or John Piscareta at the time. Nor was Frank Zane a holder of that title. The Teenage Mr. America title was then, and has always been, an official title of the AAU and its legal property.

When I served as the author/editor for the new edition of the national AAU physique rulebook in 1987, I had available to me the list of previous winners of the various AAU titles from the earlier 1977 rulebook and part of my work was to update it to the most recent year. Since there were no gaps in the record for the historical period in question, I don't know how to explain Graham's claim. I suspect his competitive bodybuilding exploits have been somehow enhanced in his memory, a tendency that has been noted among a number of other former competitive bodybuilders. In fact, retroactive exaggeration about titles won is very common in the bodybuilding field.

*Jon Reiger
Editor, AAU Official Physique Manual
Southgate, Kentucky*

DM: According to the February 1962 edition of Strength and Health Magazine, Wayne Coleman won the sectional Teenage Mr. America contest held in San Francisco in 1961. While the AAU owned exclusive legal rights to the name, other promoters had apparently done contests using the name, similar to the various world heavyweight champions in pro wrestling (the AAU physique committee rival NPC, which is affiliated with the Weider's IFBB, promoted its own Mr. America contest for years but for legal reasons had to change the name to the American Bodybuilding Championships) so for legal purposes, Graham may have never won the official Teenage Mr. America although he did win a contest with that name. Graham said he remembered the contest as being the AAU version. The AAU records list an Eastern and Midwestern sectional winner for 1961 but not a Western sectional which a contest in San Francisco surely would be.

WWF

I should have known Vince McMahon would get the last word. When they replayed the ending of the Rumble on the FOX show, a new soundtrack had been dubbed in which had the fans in Albany booing Sid and chanting "Hogan! Hogan!" This may seem minor but I'm really sick of them redoing reality. It's isn't enough for McMahon to pretend past WWF champions like

Bob Backlund, Bruno Sammartino and Billy Graham no longer exist or to pretend that long-time stars entering the WWF are rookies, now he's retroactively deciding who was cheered and booed at a PPV card just three weeks ago.

*Tim Whitehead
Johnson City, Tennessee*

Thanks for finally explaining in the Observer what Basil DeVito's job is. The WWF Vice President in charge of misleading press releases and covering up embarrassing situations has an easy out in explaining the sudden resignations of Terry Garvin and Pat Patterson. Basil can simply say the incidents were part of the WWF program of providing wholesome family entertainment and of course, providing a positive example for the youth of America.

*Jim Thompson
Detroit News*

I found it ironic about reading your piece on cocaine and Hulk Hogan and bringing up Tully Blanchard's situation and then hearing about Marty Janetty being fired by the WWF for cocaine. So now Janetty will find himself wrestling in high school gyms in Peoria so Vince McMahon can front as a serious person when it comes to drugs. I believe Vince is using Janetty as bait to clear his name for a little while. But when the story comes back, who will be the next victim? You've already said in the Observer that you were a competitive bodybuilder years ago and you emulated Billy Graham. Did you ever take steroids? You seem to know a lot more about the stuff than other journalists covering the subject and it's important to let your readers know. With steroids in sports making big waves, GQ did an interesting story in this month's issue and brought up Lyle Alzado and Arnold Schwarzenegger but didn't bring up wrestling.

*Vinnie Carolan
Stoughton, Massachusetts*

DM: Janetty was suspended due to an arrest, not the result of a test. I'm pretty sure it would have happened the same way had their been no steroid stories swirling over their head (although one can point out how Bobby Heenan wasn't suspended or punished over a drug arrest as evidence that it wouldn't, but it was also marijuana rather than cocaine although Jim Duggan was suspended for marijuana and driving to a town with the guy he was feuding with). The irony of him negotiating with WCW and similarities with Tully Blanchard and how that all turned out does have a tendency to make one suspicious. To say I emulated Billy Graham would be taking things much farther than they really were although I did have photos of him decorating my garage when I started weight training. I never used steroids because I wasn't single-minded enough toward any goals in life that steroids would help me achieve. But I can't fault those who made a different choice if they were determined to be the best in their sport and the powers that be in the sport either looked the other way (which basically means encouraged it in any sport in which they give you a competitive advantage) or outright encouraged it. It is the system and the society that is to blame. The system looks the other way or hides from the reality of the problem, encourages cover-ups, hypocrisy and dishonesty going so far as to lying in medical textbooks and educating our nations physicians to lies about steroids. This caused a chasm to develop with the medical profession and societal pressure from the media and others who don't understand the first thing about the subject on one side and the athletes who are competing at a high level and a society and media that worships the winners and forgets about second place on the other.

