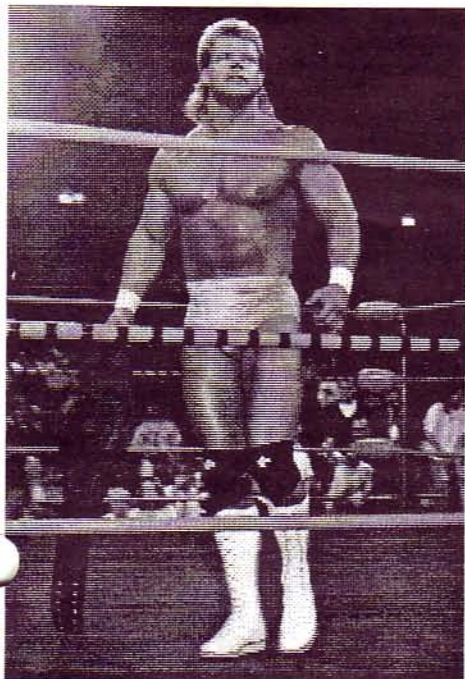


PRO WRESTLING
TORCH
W E E K L Y

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**"TOTAL PACKAGE" LEX LUGER
NEW WCW CHAMPION**

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LEX LUGER WINS WCW TITLE PINNED BARRY WINDHAM TO WIN VACANT TITLE AT BASH

BALTIMORE, MD: In one of the least celebrated World Title victories ever, Lex Luger defeated Barry Windham in 12:25 via pinfall after a piledriver. Harley Race and Curtis Hughes came to ringside at 12:00 for no apparent reason. Barry Windham, assuming they were coming to help him, signalled that he did not need their help. Meanwhile, Harley Race instructed Lex Luger to hit Windham from behind with a knee and piledrive him. Luger charged BW from behind and piledrove him leading to a clean pinfall. Luger was awarded the WCW Title and he quickly left the ring with Race and Hughes.

This win marks the first singles World Title for Lex Luger, real name Larry Pfohl. Luger's WCW Title victory will be remembered as a very tainted achievement given that he pinned the number two contender rather than the current World Champion. Ric Flair, 13 days earlier, was stripped of the WCW Title when he refused to renegotiate his existing contract to under half of the agreed upon salary.

The usual scene after a World Title victory is one of celebration with other wrestlers while fans cheer or at least stand in awe. In this case, fans stood in confusion. There was an initial pop, but that was quickly replaced with anticipation that Hughes and Race's presence would be explained. It was not.

During the bout several times fans started loud and clear chants of, "We Want Flair, We Want Flair." The announcers, Jim Ross and Tony Schiavone, did not acknowledge the cheers

and actually avoided saying Ric Flair's name while discussing the upcoming bout and why there was no World Champion going into the bout. The chants were not necessarily meant to demean Barry Windham and Lex Luger, who the crowd appeared to like. The chants were more chants at management to show them that they do not approve of them firing Ric Flair due to contract problems. The chants were strong despite Gary Capetta's pre-card announcement that WCW offered Flair to return and he turned down the offer.

The quality of the match between Lex Luger and Barry Windham was rated between **1/2 and ***, which was a disappointment considering many expected both wrestlers to attempt to put together a match of the year candidate to make fans forget about Flair. Instead, there were enough slow points in the bout that fan chants started. There was no blood in the cage match and overall, the aura of a World Title change was not present at this event as was present for past World Title Changes, including one year earlier when Sting defeated Ric Flair to become World Champion for six months.

In other events, Arn Anderson & Paul E. Dangerously lost to Rick Steiner & Missy Hyatt even though Missy Hyatt was stolen from ringside by The Hardliners before the match started. In the scaffold bout which opened the show, no one took the fall from the scaffold as new rules allowed carrying a flag from one side to the other end of the bout, which is what Bobby Eaton did to claim victory.

WWF TO BEGIN STEROID TESTING TITAN TO HOLD PRESS CONFERENCE TUESDAY

STAMFORD, CT: The WWF issued a brief press release Friday, July 12 announcing that their drug testing would expand to include steroid testing. A press conference will be held Tuesday, July 16 explaining the details of the new testing. Also, on Monday's edition of "Prime Time Wrestling," Vince McMahon announced that the WWF would begin testing for steroids. The following is a reprint of the press release.

"As a responsible leader in family sports entertainment, the World Wrestling Federation since 1987 has had the most comprehensive and well enforced drug program in all of professional sports. Now, the WWF program will be expanded to include the most comprehensive steroid policy in sports as well. After consultation with independent outside experts, a program for steroid testing, education, and rehabilitation will be implemented. Basil D. DeVito, Jr., WWF Senior Vice President of Marketing said, 'The WWF has always stood for

positive family-oriented entertainment. This innovative policy will ensure that our athletes adhere to the high standards in order to preserve their place in the world as worthy role models all over the world."

Vince McMahon also made an announcement on Monday's "Prime Time Wrestling." He stated, "From other professional sports emerge a number of stars who become superstars and espouse the message 'Don't do drugs.' We applaud their efforts. However, here in the World Wrestling Federation, we have many superstars, some of whom have even become superheroes, all of whom recognize their responsibility as role models to 'just say no to drugs.' Therefore, it should come as no surprise to you that the WWF has one of the most comprehensive drug testing, education, and rehabilitation programs in all of sports. This program will now be expanded to include testing for anabolic steroids. In short, the standard the athletes in the WWF live by will become the

standard bearer for all of professional sports for years to come. That is why when you see this symbol (WWF) you can be assured of drug-free sports entertainment that you and your entire family can be proud of."

The addition of steroid testing in the WWF came after great media pressure in major newspapers across the country, *Sports Illustrated*, and network television. Lyle Alzado's admission and condemnation of steroids also added great pressure on the WWF to relieve the public relations disaster. The image that the WWF presents through pushing muscular men to the top of the promotion, muscles likely built through the use of steroids, was going to be a subject of great scrutiny as the issue of steroid abuse in all pro athletics grew.

There is great speculation throughout the wrestling industry as to how strict and comprehensive the testing will actually be. If the steroid testing is random so users of steroids cannot plan ahead and beat the tests, anyone in the WWF using steroids will have to find alternative ways to keep themselves massive, such as the tremendously more expensive Human Growth Hormone (HGH), or else lose size. However, many insiders at this point are sceptical that the steroid testing will be strict or successful.

At Tuesday's press conference, there is great interest in how Titan Sports will respond to questions of whether steroid testing will extend into their other subsidiary, the World Bodybuilding Federation (WBF). One of the mottos the WBF has stressed is that they, unlike their competition, Joe Weider, will promote bodybuilding "the way bodybuilding was meant to be," which has been interpreted in many publications as meaning without steroid testing. The WBF's existence depends upon its members being much bigger and much more cut than an average bodybuilder on the beach or else there would be no reason to buy their magazine and pay-per-view events. Given that, strict steroid testing in the WBF would create a great problem for the Federation. But if Titan tests their wrestlers, but not their competitive bodybuilders who appear to need to be tested more than wrestlers, Titan will still face criticism and public relations problems.

Thus far, WCW's Executive Vice President Jim Herd has continued to denounce the theory that WCW needs steroid testing, although this move by the WWF adds great pressure on WCW to follow the WWF's example. WCW's crowning of Lex Luger as champion, a super-muscular bodybuilder, is already being questioned given the negative publicity toward the steroid-look. The WWF's World Champion, Hulk Hogan, is expected to be a guest on Arsenio Hall within the next two weeks and charismatically apologize for any past use of drugs.

WCW REOFFERS FLAIR CONTRACT

ATLANTA, GA: Last week, WCW legally had to re-offer Ric Flair his original contract worth approximately \$750,000 per year because it was illegal for WCW to not honor the original contract because Flair refused to take a cut in pay. As a result, possibly Flair would return to WCW at his original salary through June 1, 1992. It is also possible WCW will buy out the contract for a certain percentage of what Flair legally still has coming according to his contract.

Originally, WCW fired Ric Flair after Flair did not agree to take a cut in his weekly salary from what would equal approximately \$750,000 over 52 weeks to \$350,000 over 52 weeks, plus \$350,000 and \$250,000 in the subsequent two years expiring on June 1, 1994.

WCW spokesman, Barry Norman, last week discounted the loss of Flair in an interview with Mark Nolte, a reporter for a San Antonio newspaper. Norman said the loss of Scott Steiner due to injury was a greater loss than the firing of Ric Flair concerning the "Great American Bash" pay-per-view.

Before the broadcast of the Bash on pay-per-view, Gary Capetta announced to the fans that WCW reoffered Ric Flair a contract to return to WCW and Flair refused. This was meant to make Flair the bad guy and get sympathy on WCW. The announcement may have had nothing to do with the legit reoffer.

The press has picked up on the Ric Flair story across the country. Ric Flair's departure has been brought up on sports radio talk shows, even in the Twin Cities where WCW is virtually unknown. Mark Nolte condemned WCW for the firing of Ric Flair. He wrote, "This stinks on ice. This has absolutely nothing to do

with wrestling and everything to do with money. ... You always got your money's worth when Ric Flair was in the main event." He then compared what WCW did to Flair to the Lakers asking Magic Johnson to take a cut in pay below Vlade Divac because Johnson is "getting old"... This is not a case of a prima-donna athlete failing to live up to a deal already signed. This was the case of a company which came to its hardest working and most loyal athlete who did more for that company than any other wrestler has done and tried to humiliate him by asking him to take a pay cut of over half on a deal already signed. This would have paid Ric Flair significantly less money than either Lex Luger or Sting... Even more insulting, is it less money than what WCW offered the untalented Sid Vicious who ended up jumping to the WWF anyway... Ric Flair made WCW. Despite all of their great potential and all the talk about them, what have Sting and Lex Luger actually accomplished in their careers compared to Ric Flair? Nothing. Ric Flair is a proven commodity and proven draw when he gets a worthy opponent and a worthwhile program. Nobody else can claim that... WCW just fired the best wrestler the company ever had and slapped every fan that believed in its credibility and the credibility of its world champion right in the face." A Charlotte newspaper called for a ban of WCW due to Ric Flair's firing.

The criticism of WCW by fans and people within the company has never been higher since the firing of Flair and the way Jim Herd has been handling the steroid controversy.

"LIGHTNING KID" WINS GLOBAL LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT TITLE

DALLAS, TX: Saturday, July 13 the second Global Wrestling Federation Champion was crowned. The Patriot became the first two weeks earlier by defeating Buddy Landel in the finals of a tournament to win the GWF TV Title. Last Saturday, The Lightning Kid (Sean Waltman) defeated his Minnesota PWA rival Jerry Lynn in the finals of a tournament to win the GWF Light Heavyweight Championship.

The final bout between Kid and Lynn was said to steal the show. Kid pinned Lynn after hitting Lynn with a chain while the referee was recovering from accidentally getting hit by a flying Kid. The highlight of the bout saw Lightning Kid fly off the interview stage flying a measured 17 feet onto Jerry Lynn. GWF announcer, Scott Hudson, said concerning that move, "It made fans say, 'Cactus who?'"

Twenty-four men began the tournament. The first round, set to air on ESPN the afternoons of July 22, 23, and 24 featured Chaz over Ed Robinson, Lightning Kid over Bubba Fangman, Handsome Stranger (formerly Fabian in Pedicino's "Georgia All-Star" region) over Butch Blackhart, Rip Rogers over Ray Evans, Steve Simpson over Mike Stetson, Adrian Street over Iceman Parsons, Brian Adias over Bandelor, Mike Davis over Victor Gonzales, Jerry Lynn over the 300-plus pound Randy Rhodes, Terry Daniels over Quick Rick Garren, Terry Garvin over Kenny the Stinger, and John Tatum over Chris Germany.

Randy Rhodes, all 300-plus pounds of him, is now calling himself "Hotbody" Rhodes managed by Christopher Love. When Love claimed Rhodes was certified at 227 pounds, the referee "McCarthy" and allowed the match to start. Lynn quickly rolled up Rhodes for a 10 second victory.

The second round, to air July 29 and 30 saw Lightning Kid beat Chaz with a reverse piledriver. Handsome Stranger beat "Hustler" Rip Rogers, Danny Davis beat Brian Adias, John Tatum beat Terry Garvin, Jerry Lynn beat Terry Daniels in a face vs. face bout, and Steve Simpson beat Adrian Street when the referee stopped the match due to Street's legit broken rib. In the third round, Lightning Kid beat The Handsome Stranger when Rasta the Voo Doo Man

distracted Handsome and Kid hit Handsome with an impressive spin wheel kick. That was the best match other than the main event. Steve Simpson beat Mike Davis. Jerry Lynn beat John Tatum when Tatum kicked the referee and a second referee awarded a DQ victory to Lynn.

That left Lightning Kid, Jerry Lynn, and Steve Simpson. Kid continued to steal the show as he beat Steve Simpson with a flying cross bodyblock and a handful of tights. Lynn, who got a bye into the finals, then faced Kid. Lightning Kid was interviewed after his victory. Kid, who fans at first did not take seriously as a threat to go past the first round because he is so thin, stole the show and was the top heel in the promotion that weekend.

NEWS & ANALYSIS

WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION

STAMFORD, CT: Roddy Piper quit wrestling last week and immediately became strictly a color commentator on "Superstars of Wrestling." He stopped wrestling last week and missed every scheduled date since, including the outdoor show in St. Louis on July 14. It is not known why Piper quit actively wrestling, although a return is possible in the future. There is speculation that Piper's testimony at the steroid trial may have had something to do with him quitting active wrestling.

Vince McMahon authored an article in the July 14 New York Times in an effort to combat some of the negative press he and the WWF has been getting lately. He wrote about his father's and his grandfather's past as promoters of wrestling and boxing and his role in the development of pro wrestling from, 'sport to family-oriented sports entertainment' with which came 'an avalanche of popularity.' With this came, "an unprecedented responsibility, a responsibility to be more Walt Disney than P.T. Bamum, a responsibility to be more familyroom than smoke-filled room, a responsibility to be more main street than back street. We accepted the responsibility to set for ourselves and for our athletes the highest moral and ethical standards." He then announced the WWF's new steroid testing policy and stated, "I am determined to leave to the fourth generation McMahon, my son, a legacy of which he too can be proud."

The Mountie will no longer wrestle in Canadian arenas or on Canadian television shows. The WWF agreed to terms with The Canadian Mountie association last week just before the Canadian Mounties were going to take legal action against The Mountie for "impersonating an officer" in Regina, Saskatchewan. The problem with this deal arises when The Mountie is on a pay-per-view show, which Canada is getting wired to receive. It is one thing to pull The Mountie from Canadian house shows and change pre-taped syndicated shows, but to pull him from all pay-per-views would limit Jacques Rougeau's "Mountie" character's potential.

On July 14 in St. Louis in the baseball stadium, the WWF drew 14,500 fans which was a disappointment since it was lower

than what they drew at The Arena before WCW became the sole pro wrestling tenant. No-shows included Hawk, Jake Roberts, and Curt Hennig, all due to legitimate injuries. Ricky Steamboat beat Pat Tanaka, Kerry Von Erich fought Warlord to a double countout, British Bulldog beat Hennig's substitute, Typhoon, Bret Hart & Virgil beat Ted DiBiase & I.R.S., Hacksaw Duggan beat Earthquake, Ultimate Warrior beat The Undertaker and stuffed Undertaker into the casket, Animal & Bossman beat The Mountie & Brian Knobbs, and Hulk Hogan beat Sgt. Slaughter with Randy Savage as special referee.

July 13 at the USF Sundome in Tampa, Florida, Koko B. Ware defeated Pat Tanaka, Animal defeated Brian Knobbs, Mustafa lost via DQ to Greg Valentine, Rockers beat Power & Glory, Warlord fought Kary



LIGHTNING KID

Von Erich to a double countout, Big Bossman defeated The Mountie, and Hogan defeated Sgt. Slaughter by decision when General Adnan threw in a white towel to surrender.

BRIEFLY: The WWF cancelled their June 21 date at the Omni in Atlanta because the advance was low and mainly Hogan is now supposedly accepting some sorrow from President Bush on that day... The match reported on two issues ago where it appeared Roddy Piper was injured by Undertaker and Piper was stretched out of the ring was a legit injury believed at the time to be a concussion... Sean Mooney is the permanent host of Prime Time Wrestling with Bobby Heenan...

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING

ATLANTA, GA: Dusty Rhodes continues to follow his pattern of past booking reigns, but this time doing the same things half as well as in the past. Now Dusty Rhodes has entered his phase of turn, turn, and turn to keep fans on the edge of their seats. The only problem is he has turned Lex Luger, Jonnie B. Badd, Tommy Rich, and The Freebirds without making it clear to one fan exactly what happened. At the WCW tapings the evening of July 15, the night after the Bash pay-per-view, fans cheered the announcement of Lex Luger's WCW Title victory. When Luger was interviewed with Harley Race and Mr. Hughes, some fans continued to cheer while others were just confused. When on a "Danger Zone" Ron Simmons was announced as Luger's opponent for the August 25 event at the Omni in Atlanta, most fans believed it was a battle of faces and were only more confused. The announcers will help the fans understanding when Luger appears on TV, but angles should speak for themselves.

Another turn is of the Freebirds who did a run-in during a match between Bobby Eaton & Big Josh and The Enforcers. The Freebirds surprised the fans by brawling to the back with The Enforcers rather than attacking the face team. But the fans did not know if that meant Arn Anderson & Larry Zbyszko were turning or if The Freebirds were the faces. Since the Freebirds now wear flags on their jackets and red, white, and blue, would it not have made sense to save the debut of the new outfits until after their turn. Instead, they wore them to the Bash. The other turn was of Jonnie B. Badd who broke up with Steve Austin after a tag match and will be challenging Austin to TV Title matches. The turn occurred during a match between Robert Gibson and Austin for the TV Title when Teddy Long and Badd walked to ringside and led "rock and roll" chants. When Austin was thrown out of the ring, Badd attacked Austin. The fans, once again, had no idea who to cheer and who to boo.

Also at the tapings in Salisbury, Maryland on July 15, the August 10 TBS show was taped where Bill Kazmeir wrestled without an American Patriot gimmick teaming with Rick Steiner. One Man Gang & Black Blood defeated Matt Borne & El Gigante. For WCW Pro, Morton & Taylor & Tommy Rich, who last week turned heel and joined the York Foundation at another taping, fought Robert Gibson & Tom Zenk & Dustin Rhodes to a draw which is one of the first matches Dustin was in in which he did not gain a pinfall victory. Jonnie B. Badd defeated and unmasked The Yellow Dog, who this one time was Rip Rogers, who came to the ring to Pillman's music. Badd & Austin defeated Simmons & P.N. News via DQ when Long got DQed for using a foreign object on Simmons for the DQ. This was the match where the heat between Badd and Austin initiated. In a dark match, Sting got the biggest pop of the night as he teamed with El Gigante in beating Nikita Koloff & One Man Gang. For World Wide Wrestling, Arn Anderson & Larry Zbyszko beat Z-Man & Robert Gibson when Arn used a chain on Gibson's knee. Magnum T.A. interviewed Harley Race, Mr. Hughes, and Lex Luger. Luger stumbled through an interview which confused fans as to who's side he is on. Rick Steiner & Sting lost via DQ to The Hardliners via DQ when Steiners used a chair. Sting also did an interview in which he said he did not know what is happening with Luger, probably a shoot interview.

BRIEFLY: Magnum T.A. is now co-hosting World Wide Wrestling with Tony Schiavone while Diamond Dallas Page continues to co-host WCW Pro with new host Eric Bischoff.... Last week at the television tapings, Jonnie B Badd knocked out Terrance Taylor with one punch to earn the right to appear in August 25 one-night U.S. Title tournament at

THE BAR ROOM BRAWLERS WIN USWA TAG BELTS

STEVE DOLL REGAINS HIS NORTHWEST HEAVYWEIGHT TITLE

the Omni in Atlanta... The Oz character has been trashed, but Kevin Nash, who played Oz, may be reassigned to a position as an "American Patriot"...

GLOBAL WRESTLING FEDERATION

DALLAS, TX: Besides the Light Heavyweight Title Tournament, Friday "Major League Wrestling" was taped which saw Rasta the Voo Doo Man beat Chaz, Danny Davis beat Brian Adias, Jeff Gaylord lost to Randy Rhodes, Makhum Singh & Rip Roger, two members of Scandar Akbar's "Cartel," beat Terry Daniels & Bubba Fangman, Bill Irwin beat Skip Young, John Tatum beat Terry Garvin with his feet on the ropes.

Buddy Landel, in true Budro fashion, was fired from Global after no-showing Friday without calling. Although Landel was legitimately sick on Friday and showed up Saturday, because he did not call and he has a reputation for being unreliable, Global skipped strike one and two and called him out after the first offense. Landel's interviews were highlights of recent shows and it is possible in a month or so, he will be asked back.

BRIEFLY: Iceman Parsons also no-showed the taping... Skip Young refused to do the job to Lightning Kid in the first round and was fired immediately... Dan Spivey and Rick Rude are possible participants in the Global North American Title Tournament in four weeks...

UNITED STATES WRESTLING ASSOC.

MEMPHIS, TN: Monday night, July 8 at the Pipkin Building, Jerry Lawler defeated Eric Embry in a lumberjack match when the referee stopped the bout due to excessive bleeding by Emrby. Also, The Bar Room Brawlers won via DQ over Jeff Jarrett & Robert Fuller when Jarrett used a chair. As a result, as USWA rules dictate, The Bar Room Brawlers won the USWA Tag Team Titles. In the Mud Pit match, Miss Texas was tossed into the tub of mud in the middle of the ring by Dirty White Girl and thus Girl won the bout. Plus, Bill Dundee defeated Leatherface by DQ when Judge Dred interfered.

On the live WMC show on Saturday, July 13, Eric Embry was ranting and raving about referee Paul Neighbors decision the previous Monday. Embry beat up the referee and promoter Eddie Marlin made the save. Embry then threatened to beat up Marlin, but Marlin did not back down. As a result of the confrontation, July 15, Embry was scheduled to battle Paul Neighbors & Eddie Marlin.

Reggie B. Fine showed up on television taking notes on wrestlers who he may possibly manage. Leatherface sawed the USWA set desk in half, but the saw got stuck and Jerry Lawler grabbed a security guard's night stick and beat on Leatherface. Then all hell broke loose as the locker rooms cleared and a brawl ensued.

Monday night, July 15 at the Pipkin Building, Rob Zakowski vs. Sabu, Bill Dundee vs. Judge Dred, Dirty White Girl & Boy vs. Miss Texas & Tom Prichard in a mud pit match with Danny Davis as the special referee, Embry vs. Marlin & Neighbors, Jarrett & Fuller vs. Brawlers in a rematch, and Lawler versus Leatherface.

BRIEFLY: There was talk in the area of trying to get a Ric Flair vs. Jerry Lawler unification battle in Memphis...

PORTLAND PRO WRESTLING

PORTLAND, OR: Friday night, July 13 in Eugene, Oregon, Steve Doll regained the held up Northwest Heavyweight Title by beating Ron Harris.

On television July 14, Jimmy Jack Funk fought Mike Winters to a draw in the "boring babyface match of the week." In a comedy match, Al Madril while blindfolded lost to referee Sandy Barr, who once wrestled as "The Teenage Terror." Madril challenged Barr to a double blindfold to even the battlegrounds in two weeks. Sandy Barr said, "I don't want to stay in shape that long." Madril said he did not want to have the match next week because he refuses to wrestle during "kids' nights." Madril ended up agreeing to fight next week. Madril was going to get a pie shoved in his face because of his loss, but he kicked the pie barr was carrying and smeared the pie in the face in Barr where the most damage was done when the pie tin

cut Barr's face. Jimmy Jack made the save.

Larry Oliver, who apparently turned heel last week, battled Mike Winter. Grappler and Dirty White Boy were at ringside and offered Oliver a spot in the prestigious "Wrecking Crew" if he roughed up Mike Winter. Oliver dominated early, but Winter made a comeback. When Winter had a chance at a crotch shot and decided not to do it, the heels ran into the ring and attacked Winter. Instead of joining them, Oliver made the save, showing he is still a face.

The Fiesta Garden segment featured a sing-off between Bart Sawyer and Grappler. Grappler opened the competition with a rather impressive performance. Then, before Bart sang, he admitted he did not know how to sing very well, but he would try. He then said aloud the words to "Bad, Bad, LeRoy Brown" by reading the words from a sheet of paper. The fans decided Bart was better and cheered louder for him. While Bart gave his victory speech, he was attacked by Dirty White Boy, Grappler, and Al Madril. The match between Doug Masters and Bart Sawyer ended as television went off the air.

GEORGIA ALL-STAR

ATLANTA, GA: All-Star taped television on July 14 to air in Georgia on July 27, August 3, August 10, and August 17. The first hour saw Chic Donovan beat Moose Mahoney, Walker & Fabian beat The Flies, and Big Bully Busch won his bout. The second hour saw Hillbilly Festus beat Ron Davis, Brute Force beat J. Robers & M. Roberts, and Steve Lawler beat Fabian. The third hour saw Johnny Dove who was trained by Bill Eadie at the Global academy beat Golden Eagle. Mad Dog Joe beat Dan Roberts, Farmer Boy Elis beat Jake Jackson, who was nicknamed "Little Van Vader" due to his resemblance to Leon White. The final hour of tapings saw Festus fight Mad Dog Joe to a no-decision when the wrestlers threw out the referees, wrestlers, and almost the commissioner. Lawler & Busch beat T.J. Dollar & Awesome T.C., and Walker & Fabian beat Brute Force via DQ.

BRIEFLY: Van Hammer, who most recently wrestled for Georgia All-Star, appears to be getting a position with WCW as he was present back stage at the Baltimore PPV... Trivia-wise, Van Hammer was "Jonnie B. Badd" Mark Merrow's roommate in Florida several years ago... Scotty the Body is still injured enough to hinder his performance according to Joe Pedicino, so he will not use Scotty in Global or All-Star until he is at 100 percent... Billy Black is still TV Champion for All-Star and Joel Deaton is the Georgia Heavyweight Champion...

REGIONAL NOTES

All-Star Pro Wrestling held an event in front of an estimated 300 fans at a VFW in Indian Rocks Beach, FL on July 13 which saw Kevin the Wizard Katlan defeat Angelo Poffo, Mike Kerrio fight Mike Kasio to a draw, Lanny Poffo defeat Brown, Pat Armstrong defeat Man Mountain Brody via DQ, and The New Sensations defeat Tommy Starr & Kenny Kendall.. The same night in Florida, Boris Molenko drew 100 fans to see a show at his wrestling camp in Florida.

Pro Wrestling America drew 200 fans on Monday, July 15 to Roper's in Fridley, MN. Lightning Kid lost via submission to The Mystic, Frank Anderson, the great Sweedish Amateur, defeated Randy Thorton, Charlie Norris retained his PWA Title against The Punisher (Jamie Magnum), Tommy Ferrara beat The Golden Idol, and Kevin Wilson fought Willie the Splash to a draw in possibly the most anti-climatic main event in Roper's history.

Next week Torch will feature Bill Kunkel's "Potshots," a guest column by Chris Cruise rebutting a recent column by Mark Madden, plus all the latest news, results, letters, and columns.

The Annual is scheduled to be published in mid-August featuring extensive interviews with Bill Waits, Jerry Lawler, Roy Shire, and more. Keep your contributions coming in: "Most Memorable Moments," "All-Time Favorite Wrestlers," "Booking Ideas," and top ten lists. Deadline for all Annual contributions is July 27.

Thanks to everyone in Baltimore who made the Bash weekend such a memorabl e experience. I hope to meet more of you at the convention in Chicago this weekend. Until next week, good bye.

WWF promoted an event at the Des Moines Veteran's Memorial Auditorium in Des Moines, Iowa on Friday, July 5, in front of an estimated 6500 fans. Fresh back from Saudi Arabia, Doyle Norris filed the following report...

1) THE BERZERKER pinned JIM POWERS. When the opening match of the card is the best match of the night, you are thankful the card is only two hours. Nord took some excellent bumps and Powers sold everything. {**1/2}

2) DAVEY BOY SMITH defeated TYPHOON by countout. The fans still cheered for Tugboat, but he worked the crowd well into booing him. There was

RINGSIDE BEAT EVENT COVERAGE

too much stalling and just a few power moves. The ending was rushed. Typhoon took no-show Hennig's place. {**}

3) PAUL ROMA & THE BROOKLYN BRAWLER lost to THE BUSHWACKERS when Roma was pinned. Is anyone else tired of this gimmick? Too much comedy. {1/2*}

4) JAKE ROBERTS pinned EARTHQUAKE in a poorly worked match. EQ pounded on Jake. Finally, Jake hit him with the DDT. After a near fall, Jake managed to crawl over and put an arm on EQ for the pin. Andre was at ringside, but did nothing. {*/2}

5) RICKY "THE DRAGON" STEAMBOAT schoolboyed COL. MUSTAFA. Mustafa is the worst wrestler I have seen. Steamboat lacks a lot in this character, including decent opponents. His gimmick stinks. No selling or good offense. {DUD}

6) "JUMPING" JIM BRUNZELL submitted to a full-nelson from THE WARLORD. This match should have never been booked. It was as bad as it sounds. {DUD}

7) THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR won by DQ when THE UNDERTAKER hit him with the urn. While trying to stuff him in the bodybag, Warrior made his own comeback. The Warrior did a lot of good moves and showed either a) how much he has improved or b) how bad a wrestler Mark Calloway really is.

NOTES: The WWF returns August 10 with Hogan vs. Slaughter with Savage as ref, IRS vs. Hammer, Nasties vs. Rockers, Mountie vs. Bossman, Duggan vs. Mustafa, Hitman vs. Barbie... The follow-up syndicated program's interviews alluded to a time-limit draw in Hennig and Bulldog's previous bout. Who exposes what business?... Being in the desert for six months was my excuse for going to a WWF card, but while it was entertaining, I am also contemplating reestablishing my ban of WWF house shows if things do not improve quickly...

Carolina Championship Wrestling held an event at Dickenson Centre in Monroe, North Carolina on July 4, 1991 in front of an estimated 250 fans. Bobby Yates filed the following report...

1) RIKKI NELSON pinned RICKY STAR. Great opening bout. Nelson has learned to act like an Eric Embry with a personality. {***1/4}

2) THE GERMAN STORM TROOPER pinned THE MUMMY. Storm Trooper has potential. Mummy wore an outfit that looked like a condom with wrinkles. {**1/2} mainly for Trooper.

3) MIGHTY JOE KIDD pinned BAD BOY DULA. I hate midjet wrestling so I cannot give an unbiased judgement. I got a hot dog and a Pepsi.

4) TOMMY ANGEL pinned a bogus ROCKY ANDERSON. Gene Anderson was handcuffed to a verily large ring announcer. He put Man Mountain Brody to shame. Gene's starting to look like old Mid-Atlantic announcer Charlie Harrell. After the match, the Big Man squashed Gene in the corner. {**}

5) LADY X with Jim Cornette pinned BAMBI to keep the LPWA Title. Bambi and Cornette were great. Match was okay, but Cornette made the match. {**1/2}

6) AMERICAN G.I. beat IVAN KOLOFF in a waste of time. "I'll claim my flag before you claim yours, but we'll stall and bore the rednecks for a short eternity in the process" matches.. Ended with a ref bump. {*/1/4} for Ivan.

7) VINCE TORELLI pinned TOMMY SEABOLT to defend the SAPA Title. Best match I have seen since the two All-Japan Women's match on

CORNETTE WRESTLES MIXED TAG LAWLER VS. EMBRY ENDS IN A FOUR ON ONE ATTACK

January 5 when I was in Japan. Solid match. About 20 minutes of great brawling as well as a quick paced scientific beginning to a knee-high slugfest. The match ended when Storm Trooper jumped Seabolt during the ref bump. After the match, Seabolt got a chair and popped Torelli solidly in the chest and DDTed him on the belt. {***1/2}

8) JACKIE FULTON & BAMBI beat JIM CORNETTE & STAN LANE. Bobby Fulton supposedly missed a plane in Dallas. Lane and Cornette hinted at a split. Good match. Fulton and Lane worked most of the match. Fulton has improved. When the ref was distracted, Bambi bodyslammed Cornette and pinned him even though Lane and Fulton were the legal participants. {**1/2}

9) MANNY FERNANDEZ beat CHRIS CHAVIS in a First Blood Match. Both worked hard and stiff. Someone from the crowd gave Fernandez something after yet another ref bump. Fernandez juiced first, but had a towel and hid long enough for the ref to see Chris's blood first and call for the bell. {***}

10) CHRIS CHAVIS won a battle royal with everyone from the card participating, including Bambi and Cornette. This was Royal Rumble style with wrestlers entering once every 30 seconds. When Cornette was called, he went under to the ring. When the referees went to get him, Stan distracted them.

Bambi crawled under the ring going after Cornette. Stan came out from under the ring, adjusted his tights, and said, "Thanks." He then smiled and pretended he was smoking a cigarette. As the match progressed, Jim finally got in. Jim and Stan were the last two in the ring against Chavis. Lane and Cornette were great and looked to have a great time. {***}

NOTES: This was a great card, lasting three and a half hours... [Danny Parris also contributed to this report.]

WCW held an event at the New Coliseum in Charlotte, North Carolina in front of an estimated 1000 fans. Danny Parris filed the following report...

1) BIG JOSH beat JOEY MAGGS in 8:18. {DUD}

2) STEVE ARMSTRONG beat JIMMY GARVIN in 14:53. It was too slowly paced with too much stalling. {DUD}

3) "Z-MAN" TOM ZENK beat THE DIAMOND STUD in 9:43. Z-Man tried a cradle but the referee was knocked down. Diamond Dallas Page came in, Z-Man pinned Page, and the referee made the three count. WCW has too many ref bumps and ridiculous finishes. {*/2}

4) BOBBY EATON fought STEVE AUSTIN to a time-limit draw in 10:00. Too short. Austin looked a lot better than he did in the USWA. {**}

5) DUSTIN RHODES & SAM HOUSTON lost to RICHARD MORTON & TERRANCE TAYLOR in 18:11. I wonder if Dustin will ever do a job as long as Dusty is the booker? I doubt it. {*}

6) EL GIGANTE beat the hell out of ARN ANDERSON in 4:36. Another DUD. {DUD}

7) P.N. NEWS beat JOHNNY B. BADD in 7:30 when Teddy Long interfered. Neither wrestler impressed me. {*}

8) STING fought NIKITA KOLOFF to a double countout in 7:51.

9) LEX LUGER pinned BARRY WINDHAM in 9:45. Luger and Windham tried, but only worth one star. {*}

USWA promoted an event in Evansville, Indiana on Wednesday, July 3 in front of an estimated 375 fans. Jeff Osborne of "Memphis Weekly" filed the following report...

1) DOUG GILBERT fought SAMU to a 15 minute draw. Not much to this match, but Samu took some good DDT's. Gilbert closed out his USWA days in opening bouts. {*}

2) ROB ZAKOWSKI defeated TEX SALINGER in a Vietnam Combat Match. Tex took some legit

kicks resulting in a busted nose and lip. Rob used his groinault in the fifth round to pin Tex. {**1/2}

3) JUDGE DREAD fought ROBERT FULLER to a no-contest when Samu jumped in the ring with powder. Match was only about five minutes. {DUD}

4) DIRTY WHITE BOY & GIRL beat DR. TOM PRICHARD & MISS TEXAS. The end came when Dirty White Boy got knocked out of the ring. Texas held DWG as Dr. Tom climbed to the top rope. Prichard jumped, DWG moved, and Prichard hit Miss Texas instead. DWG then pinned Texas for the win. The place went nuts. {***1/2}

5) JERRY LAWLER fought ERIC EMBRY to a double countout. Embry took some really hard chair shots. After the match, Dread, Samu, and Leatherface (Tex Sallinger) jumped Lawler. Leatherface's chainsaw would not start which was funny. Embry hit Leatherface with the chainsaw by mistake, then Lawler cleared the ring. After the show, [Tex walked out of the heel dressing room carrying the Leatherface mask on top of his bag.]

WCW promoted a "Great American Bash" July 7 in Richmond, Virginia at the Richmond Coliseum. Tim Noel filed the following report...

1) TERRANCE TAYLOR beat BRIAN ARMSTRONG in 8:57. Armstrong's dropkick hit Taylor in the mid-section. He is pale and has no muscular definition. Hughes clotheslined Brian and rolled him up for the pin. {3/4*}

2) JOHNNY B. BADD pinned BIG JOSH with a knockout punch and squash-like cover in 12:18. Lots of stalling. {*}

3) TOM ZENK defeated THE DIAMOND STUDD when Z-Man pinned Studd's manager, Diamond Dallas Page at 3:55. Before the match, Page told the woman who was picked to "strip the stud" to only take his pants off and not to reach down too far. {*/4}

4) STEVE ARMSTRONG lost to MICHAEL HAYES after Big Daddy Dink distracted the referee and Garvin DDTed Steve at 12:12. Hayes stalled and posed. Garvin spent over half of the match on the apron, working as hard as Hayes. {3/4*}

5) RICK STEINER & SAM HOUSTON won via DQ over THE HARDLINERS, or "The Expanding Waistliners" in 20:00. Houston did what he is best at, taking punishment. Murdoch did his usual spitting and staggering routine. {**1/4}

6) RON SIMMONS & MISSY HYATT beat ARN ANDERSON & PAUL E. DANGEROUSY. Simmons looked great in his new white spandex pants. Paul E. announced that anyone with \$20 could meet Missy in the parking lot. Then, to answer a "Paul E. Sucks!" chants, he said, "Yeah, I do, but her mom taught me how." Paul was slammed off the top and clotheslined by Simmons who tagged in Missy for the fall at 5:00. Missy wore all white, too. {1/2*}

7) BOBBY EATON fought STEVE AUSTIN to a time limit draw in 10:00. Bobby applied the neckbreaker and Alabama Jam and got a two and a half count when the bell rang. {**}

8) DUSTIN RHODES won via DQ in a grudge match over RICHARD MORTON in a mere 3:35. Hughes left Dustin lying in the ring. Eaton made the save. {**1/2}

9) YELLOW DOG & STING & LEX LUGER & EL GIGANTE beat BARRY WINDHAM & ONE MAN GANG & NIKITA KOLOFF & KEVIN SULLIVAN in 16:00. Pillman was held down by Windham as OMG gave him three 747's. Pillman did a 360 degree flip after being sickled. Nikita did a 360 degree flip. Nikita did the same after a Luger clothesline. OMG accidentally avalanched Nikita. Lex powerslammed Barry and had him in the rack when Sullivan came in and hit him with an actual hammer. He also low-blowed Pillman with it. Sting got Windham's head between the rings and used him as a human plunger which also happened here three years ago at War Games. Sullivan submitted to El Gigante's claw. El was in the ring one minute, tops. {***1/2}

BRIEFLY: WCW returns on September 20... Sting and Luger were at a pre-match autograph session and here highly impersonal, barely looking at the fans...



STEVE AUSTIN MISSES
BOBBY EATON

MAJOR EVENT TORCH ANALYSIS



THE BASH'S OFFICIAL MASCOT

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING'S GREAT AMERICAN BASH '91

JULY 14, 1991
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND
BALTIMORE ARENA



HARLEY RACE & MR. HUGHES

-World Championship Wrestling presented their third live pay-per-view event of the year from Baltimore Arena in Baltimore, MD on July 14 in front of an estimated crowd of 7000 fans.

META MATCH ANALYSIS by Wade Keller

The program opened with a video of a camera starting outside the arena, passing fans in line for tickets, purchasing their own pair of tickets, and then entering the area. Jim Ross and Tony Schiavone quickly introduced the show before the first match started.

1) **BOBBY EATON & P.N. NEWS** defeated **STEVE AUSTIN & TERRANCE TAYLOR** in 6:00 when Bobby Eaton successfully crossed to the other side of the scaffold, captured the heels' flag, and returned it to their side. The new rules for the scaffold match at first seemed like a rip off, but on second thought it a much more sane way to conduct an insane match. Overall, there was very little action and mainly the wrestlers trying not to fall off the scaffold while staring at their opponents. After Eaton captured the flag, he used it as a weapon against Austin and Taylor. Austin retrieved some hair spray from Lady Blossom and sprayed it in Eaton's and News's eyes. After all the wrestlers hit the mat, there was a short stint of brawling. {1/4*}

As the WCW Crew disassembled the scaffold, Tony Schiavone and Jim Ross discussed how Ric Flair turned down WCW's latest offer and that means a new WCW Champion would be crowned and a new page in the history of WCW was about to be established.

Eric Bischoff, formerly with the AWA, debuted for WCW interviewing Paul E. Dangerously & Am Anderson. Bischoff looked very nervous, but did an adequate job.

2) **"Z-MAN" TOM ZENK** lost to **THE DIAMOND STUD**(Scott Hall) via pinfall. In 9:00 Zenk entered the ring by flying over the top rope onto Stud. The match was constant solid action, including out of ring brawling. Z-Man dominated most of the bout. The end came when Diamond Dallas Page distracted Zenk and Stud belly-to-back suplexed and bridged Zenk into a three count. {**}

3) **RON SIMMONS** pinned **OZ** (Kevin Nash) to say goodbye to another all-sizzle-no-steak gimmick. Simmons dominated most of the match and ended the bout with a series of shoulder blocks. The Wizard attempted to interfere, but he was unable to stop Simmons from winning. {*}

4) **ROBERT GIBSON** was pinned by **RICKY MORTON** after Morton hit Gibson with Alexandra York's computer. The bout did not live up to its potential. Gibson looked rusty. Morton worked on Gibson's leg most of the match, which slowed the match and cut back totally on high spots. Like Jim Ross said early in the match concerning Robert Gibson, "If you're looking for flying maneuvers, now you say goodbye to that." {*}

5) **THE YOUNG PISTOLS & DUSTIN RHODES** defeated **THE FREEBIRDS & BADSTREET** (Brad Armstrong) with Big Daddy Dink at ringide in 17:00 of an elimination match. Steve Armstrong was the first to go down at 13:00 after a double DDT by the Birds. Then Michael Hayes was eliminated by countout. Tracy Smothers was

eliminated with another double DDT. That left Jimmy Garvin and Bradstreet against Dustin Rhodes, but not for long as Garvin fell victim to a clothesline. Dustin took the advantage over Bradstreet and had him in a pinning position when Big Daddy Dink climbed to the top rope. The referee successfully convinced Dink that he is not in the kind of shape where he should be climbing to top ropes. When the referee turned around, he counted to two before Bradstreet kicked out. A moment later, Dustin was going for the bulldog when Dink entered the ring. Dustin kicked Dink before driving Bradstreet's head to the mat and gaining a three count. {**1/2}

6) **JONNIE B. BADD** (Mark Mellow) lost via **DQ** to **THE YELLOW DOG** (Brian Pillman) in the best match Badd has had on television. There were a few missed moves. Pillman was on offense most of the match. At the end, Pillman came off the top rope onto Badd and covered Badd when Long entered the ring and caused the DQ. {*3/4}

Eric Bischoff was sent on his second assignment, interviewing Missy Hyatt in her locker room about her upcoming match. Missy's locker room attendant read a note from Jason wishing her luck and then left. Bischoff ventured into the dressing room looking for Missy, and ended up spotting her in the shower. Missy, upon seeing Eric screamed, forgetting that she has been exploring men's locker rooms on the last few pay-per-views.

7) **BLACK BLOOD** (Billy Jack Haynes) lost via pinfall to **BIG JOSH** (Matt Borne) in a lumberjack match where the good action came from the lumberjacks. BlackBlood attacked Josh before the bell. Blood threw Josh outside the ring to the heel side and all the heels beat on him. When Josh threw Blood out there, they told him to take him time and helped him back in the ring. This continued for several minutes until finally the lumberjacks from both sides of the ring started fighting. When referee Nick Patrick tried to break up the brawl, Blood beat on Josh with a board. Dustin, sensing unfair play, rammed Blood with a crutch and then Josh rolled up Blood for a small package pin. {3/4*}

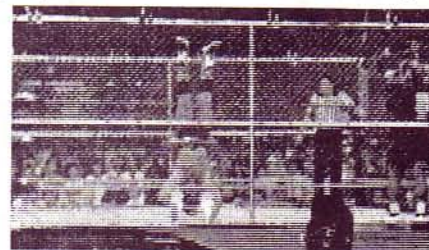
8) **ONE MAN GANG** in 7:00 lost to **EL GIGANTE**, who came to the ring with three midgets behind him and one on his shoulders. All four midgets attacked Sullivan and bit the Gang. The midgets quickly left the scene, of course, so they could get back to credible, serious wrestling. One Man Gang tried to run into Gigante knocking him down. Gigante only sold in slow motion accompanied by wierd facial expressions. Sullivan handed Gang a wrench that the ring crew used and Gang used it against Gigante; there is no truth, however, to the rumor that Kevin Sullivan is going to be joining The American Patriots as "Hardware Hank." Gigante slammed Gang off the top rope and then vertical suplexed him. Sullivan climbed to the top rope and Gang intercepted Sullivan and applied the claw. Gang saved Gigante and then Sullivan handed Gang his secret powder. As Gang was about to throw it at Gigante, Gigante kicked the

powder into Gang's face, charged him with a solid clothesline, and then pinned him. Okay for two comedy big men. {*}

A highlight clip was shown again of Sting vs. Nikita Koloff, which I believe now has been shown more times than Dusty has scars.

9) **NIKITA KOLOFF** defeated **STING** in 10:00 of a boring Russian Chain Match that even Sting was apologizing for to fans after the show at a restaurant. The bout ended when Sting charged Nikita ramming him into the fourth corner ending the bout. There was some decent out of ring brawling and a decent amount of give and take, but they were restrained from anything by throwing punches and crotching their opponent with the chain because they were attached at the wrist. They did not bleed because that is against commission rules in Baltimore. After the match, Sting added a few crotchlines with the chain to Nikita which recieved a polite applause of the crowd. {3/4*}

10) **LEX LUGER** pinned **BARRY WINDHAM** in 13:00 to become the new WCW Heavyweight Champion after a piledriver. The 13 minutes of action was solid, but not spectacular. There were good exchanges and it really was a great start to a 25-plus minute bout. Unfortunately again, there was too much booked in too short a time, thus rushing what should have been a match of the year candidate and politically



THE PILEDRIVER BEFORE THE PIN

should have been longer so fans would be less upset at Flair being gone. Instead, they were given less time than Flair and Eaton were given, but only two minutes less with only one fall, not best of three. The prestige of this match was not helped by the World belt being an old Florida belt with a plain plate glued on

the cover with Elmer's glue. After both wrestlers' entrance into the ring, the camera panned the ringside fans who were clearing and succinctly. After the match established a slow pace, the chants started again and were strong for about another minute and then disappeared. Windham had control of the bout until missing a top rope elbow drop. Luger then retaliated with a series of clotheslines, a powerslam, and a suspenseful torture rack. Barry quickly countered the move and used the ropes for leverage to turn it into a belly-to-back suplex. Lex went for a superplex, but Barry kicked Lex to the ground and nailed him with a flying clothesline. Then Harley Race and Mr. Hughes approached ringside. Windham acted like he figured they were there to help him, since they were heels, but told them to go away because he was doing fine. Instead, though, while BW was telling Hughes to leave, Race instructed Luger to charge BW from behind and piledrive him. Luger did just that and got the pin before Barry Windham knew what hit him. There was no more of a celebration for this win than any other Luger win. There was no explanation that what just happened was officially Lex Luger's turn heel. Luger really did nothing wrong and neither did Windham, Hughes, or Race. It was just a strange set of circumstances with no obvious, explainable storyline.

LUGER WINS TITLE, NO ONE CARES

FAN REACTION TO SHOW VEHEMENTLY NEGATIVE

{**3/4}

11) RICK STEINER & MISSY HYATT beat ARN ANDERSON & PAUL E. DANGEROUSLY in 2:00. Missy Hyatt was carried away by The Hardliners before Missy could get in the cage, so it was just Rick vs. Arn & Paul. You would think if Paul E. wanted to increase his chances of winning, he would have had The Hardliners take away Rick instead of Missy. Rick pinned Paul E. to end the bout. It turns out Baltimore passed a rule against men and women competing against each other in the same match, thus even though they advertised the match, there was no way Missy could get in the cage. {1/4*}

META COLUMNIST COMMENTS:

BRUCE MITCHELL (2): Best: Luger vs. Windham. Worst: Scaffold. One point goes to the handful of wrestlers on the card who performed professionally under terrible circumstances. Add a point just because management is capable of worse. A complete and utter fiasco. Forget the money, I want three hours of my life back. The scaffold was the perfect opener, but nobody understood what was happening during it. Give the wrestlers credit for saying "screw-it" and simply crawling down. No sense risking your life for these morons. Jim Ross did not even know the match was over. Ross's boredom and unhappiness was evident the entire night. Schiavone tried, but his effort made him sound pathetic. Is Eric "The Pervert" Bishoff's hair made of plastic? Stud is the black hole of heat. DDP should never take his sun glasses off for any reason. Tom Zenk tried. Tom seemed to stand still while Oz sucked air. Ricky Morton, with his silly get up and mismatched ringstyle, makes for a ridiculous heel. Give Virgil some credit for restraint. Dustin, by my count, only beat four guys on this show. When did Barry turn? The incomprehensible ending of the WCW Title match cheated Luger's fans. Picking Luger as champ shows how out of touch this company is with the national steroid story. Who screwed up Missy's hair? I feel sorry for Arn. The question no longer is whether the entire front office and half the alleged talent should be fired, it is when they will pull the plug on this god-awful mess.

BILL KUNKEL (5): The only reaction this show produced in me was one of complete and total ennui. Nothing seemed to be important. Nothing seemed to matter. The only match that was entertaining to me was Gibson vs. Morton. There were more tainted finishes than I have seen in a long time. I do not care if you pin him in the middle, if the guy gets hit by the manager or distracted first, then it is no longer a clean finish. There was nothing outright horrendous, but there was nothing I have the urge to watch again. The thing they did with Missy Hyatt was appalling. I felt like grabbing the phone and asking for my money back.

PAUL MACARTHUR (4.5): Everyone with me rated it lower than I did. Where do you start when talking about this. The Bash will be renamed, "Baltimore Screw Job '92" next year in the tradition of previous Bashes. Best: Freebirds vs. Young Pistols & Dustin Rhodes. It did look like Dustin got a great

reaction. Morton vs. Gibson started hot, but quickly cooled to working the leg. The whole thing screwed from screwed up angles to screw-job finishes.

CHRIS ZAVISA (0): This was the worst pay-per-view ever. I call it the "Great American Botch." The scaffold match was just terrible and the rest ranged from terrible to just fair and that is not the kind of thing you pay for on this type of thing. I counted at least five crotch shots in the so-called Russian Chain match, and this is in a promotion that has outlawed blading; this makes no sense at all. Missy Hyatt being abducted from ringside before the match started is a clear rip-off. I thought the championship match merited two stars minus one star for the finish. If that was supposed to be a heel turn, that was one of the best in history. It reminded me of the 1987 Starrcade Steve Williams heel turn. Tony Schiavone concluded, "WCW made a statement tonight." Their statement should be, "We suck." I just hated it. The only good thing is that at least it freed me a few hours for the next few weekends because I will not have to watch their show anymore.

META READER COMMENTS:

JOHN MUSE (1): The finish to the main event was terrible. If they were trying to accomplish a heel turn with Luger, they needed a tour guide to explain what was happening. This was the worst pay-per-view I have seen.

RYAN JONES (1): And giving it a "1" is pushing it. I don't know what that Harley Race crap was. I thought everything sucked. Best: There was not one. Too long. I just hated it.

BRIAN LAUGHLIN (1.5): It really sucked. There were very few good matches. The best match was probably the six-man elimination tag, although that one sucked. The worst: Too painful to think about. The WCW Title main event was very rushed and confusing and I do not think they can get anyone to care about Harley Race. Eric Bishoff was one of the worst things of the night. Missy Hyatt's angle was dumb. This looks like the end.

CARLIE GILL (8): Best: Barry vs Lex. Worst: Oz vs. Simmons. Overall it was a decent match. I really enjoyed the Freebirds posing routine. I feel sorry for Bobby Eaton getting stuck with P.N. News. I was hoping he would throw him overboard. I hope the "We Want Flair" chants ended up ruining the career of Jim Herd because he is ruining WCW. Overall, a good show.

ANDY STOWELL (0.3): It was a very significant night. This was the night that Vince McMahon won the whole sheban. The promotion is dead in the water. Absolutely dead. The only match that I thought was half-way decent was Barry vs. Luger, about three stars. You know in three months Luger is going to be defending against Dustin Rhodes. I give up. Worst match: Scaffold.

JASON POWELL (3): Best: Morton vs. Gibson, I guess. Worst: Scaffold match. What a depressing sight. The main event stunk. I mean, Ross did not even get into it. If does not get into it, how I am I supposed to get into it?

PETER THEILE (0): Morton vs. Gibson was best. Worst: Everything else tied. Dusty is terrible. I cannot believe I had to sit through this. I mean, Verne Gagne's PPV was better than this. I cannot believe where Dusty and Jim Herd have taken this. They have got to go.

DAN McCOSKO (2): Worst: Josh vs. Borne. Best: Windham vs. Luger, although for a cage match, it was really boring. Thumbs down.

ERIC KRÖL (1): This was the worst pay-per-

view I have ever seen. Best match by default was Luger vs. Windham. The worst match was Simmons vs. Oz. This card had not one great match. Their opening with a simulation of the fan entering the building was great. Stud vs. Zenk was the second best match of the night, so you know the show is in trouble. Nikita missing from the top ten did not make sense.

GABRIEL DAIGLE (3): Definite thumbs down. Best Match: Morton vs. Gibson. Worst: Scaffold. They kept mentioning that this was the beginning of a new era, but if that is the case, then leave me off the train. You never got the feeling that this was a big event, even with the crowd the size it was. The only high point of the night is that it looks like Luger is going heel and he is much better as a heel. Thank god for the "We Want Flair" chants.

JOSEPH PERRY (3.5): Wade, I hope part of your trip to Baltimore was worthwhile. Best: Windham vs. Luger was best, but only 1/2*. The scaffold match was ***. This competes with Wrestlemania VII as worst

PPV of the year. At least WMVII had Savage vs. Ultimate to make the show worthwhile. Instead of using this PPV as a building block after Flair's departure, they just solidified their position of inferiority to the WWF. House shows should be this good and PPV's should be much better. I went into this show with guarded optimism and left confused, frustrated, and ripped off.

SCOTT JAMES (3): This show was no better than the usual TV show. In fact, it was barely better than a regular house show.

MIKE WOOD (1): I cannot think of what to say. I am speechless.

CHRIS MARTIN (1.5): I was hoping Ross and Schiavone would break into a fight. One guy I was with pulled out his flashlight and started reading comments. I

pulled out my harmonica and was trying to add a few sound effects to the moves. It was probably the most pathetic thing I have ever seen. They lost at least three wrestling fans tonight, although being the hardcore I am, I will probably order the next pay-per-view.

JEFF COHEN (3): I had heard that without Flair that WCW is no better than the AWA. Well, the present of Eric Bishoff certainly proved that. They really needed Paul E. on color. Ross and Schiavone seemed to be at a real loss on how to describe a dead card.

FINAL THOUGHTS by Wade Keller

Everyone has already said it all. I look on the bright side, the worse Jim Herd and Dusty Rhodes do, the shorter their stay will be in WCW. After talking with people close to the situation and listening to everyone's comments, it is evident that WCW is not producing a product that hardcore fans like or that many insiders like. Ross showed little enthusiasm for this product on the air, and that is not his fault. He can only act excited to a certain point. The early 1.07% buyrate is really bad, but by today's WCW standards and what it could have been given Flair's departure and all the bad publicity about steroids in wrestling in general, it could have been worse.

My personal score on the show was a 2.5 out of 10 live and on tape, a 1. Being there live makes you part of the show and that adds excitement to a card with nothing reaching three stars. Everything Dusty Rhodes did is so far beyond possible justification and explanation I cannot believe it. Production-wise, they are light years ahead of where they were just two years ago. But concerning action and overall product, WCW has totally lost sight of what the fans really want.



LEX LUGER, NEW WCW CHAMP

META NUMBERS...

META AVERAGE SCORE: 2.1

BEST MATCH: LEX LUGER VS. BARRY

WINDHAM (85%); YOUNG PISTOLS & DUSTIN

RHODES VS. FREEBIRDS (12%); ROBERT

GIBSON VS. RICKY MORTON (3%)

WORST MATCH: Bobby Eaton & P.N. News vs.

Steve Austin & Terrance Taylor (92%); Oz vs.

Ron Simmons (6%); Black Blood vs. Big Josh

(2%)

EARLY BUYRATE NUMBER: 1.07%

MEADOWLANDS BASH

Here are my observations on the July 3 WCW Meadowlands Bash. Best match was War Games. Second best: Stud vs. Zenk. Worst: Hardliners vs. Steiner & Zenk. The six-man was an enjoyable opener. Hayes worked the crowd tremendously and The Desperadoes's comedy spots were pretty funny. Big Josh was pretty "over" while Terrance Taylor played a great heel. Dustin's loud pop shocked me and my brother. I still do not know why Tom Zenk does not go over with this crowd. He worked hard and took good bumps, including one over the rail and practically on top of us. The mixed tag provided good comedy. Strangely, or not so strangely, Paul E. and Arn Anderson received big pops. P.N. News did not, but

READER RHETORIC

Missy Hyatt did. Steve Austin really impressed me. He took great bumps and played a great heel role, especially when he challenged a fan to jump the rail and get in the ring. Lady Blossom is a knockout and her ringside act is great. She was even winking at one fan. Hardliners vs. Rick Steiner & Tom Zenk had no heat mainly due to the nature of the heels' offense. War Games had no juice and Flair probably would have made it better. Nonetheless, it was an excellent match. Windham, Pillman, and Sting all worked really hard. Sullivan using the hammer in War Games was hilarious. Though the sudden departure of Ric Flair hung over the show like a dark cloud, WCW still presented an excellent, enjoyable card. By the way, Luger looks monstrous up close.

Finally, Ric Flair, good luck wherever you go. Please do not go to Vince.

IAN GOODWIN
Brooklyn, NY

Thumbs down to the Great American Bash at the Meadowlands. Ric Flair's absence from the card was not the only problem with the show. There were no squash matches, only eight bouts overall, but it did not help. The matches just were not exciting. To put it bluntly, the Bash was a bore.

Best match, by default, was Z-Man's win over Diamond Stud. At least they gave us some action. Zenk's entrance - a flying bodypress off the top rope, nailing Stud and Diamond Dallas Page - was just about the best move I saw all night. But since when does pinning your opponent's manager entitle you to the win?

Worst match was Freebirds vs. Desperadoes in the opener. The mixed-tag, mid-card farce? I did not expect much from the later match, but I hated seeing the Birds play second banana to those overexposed Bushwacker wannabes. What a waste.

Biggest disappointment was Rick Steiner & Zenk vs. The Hardliners. Without Scott in the ring doing one hot move after another, Rick seemed listless and the match was slow because there was no one to pick up the pace.

Second biggest disappointment was War Games. Lots of brawling, lots of action, (and lots of "We Want Flair" chants), but there were so many bodies in the ring, and it was so hard to see inside the cage, that after a while, I just did not care. Bad booking here, too. El Gigante joins the fray as the last man in and wins the match by applying the clawhold on Old Man Sullivan. So what? If the title bout is supposed to feature Luger vs. Windham, why were those two not sent in last to whet our appetite? War Games turned into Bore Games and that is a shame.

A final note regarding Flair: Mr. Herd, if he refused to do a job, if he balked at losing the strap, if he hedged at working a tag match with Missy, okay. Then fine him. Suspend him. But do not fire him. Is saving Ted Turner's dough so important? Think of the long term devastation through alienation of your fans.

Hmmm. Flair is going to have to go somewhere. Maybe those guys who were ejected from that WWF show a few weeks ago wearing Ric Flair t-shirts were just a little ahead of their time.

STUART BRYNIEN
Brooklyn, NY

REACTION TO FLAIR FIRING

The local sportscaster in Greenville, South Carolina - Stan Olenik, a legit wrestling fan - reported that WCW had fired Ric Flair over a contract dispute. He went on to comment that he "can't imagine the sport

REACTION TO RIC FLAIR'S FIRING MEADOWLANDS BASH, THUMBS UP AND DOWN

without 'Nature Boy' Ric Flair. No smirks or anything of the kind. The whole affair of WCW's total disregard and disrespect of one of the most loyal and clearly the most talented wrestler they ever had sickens me more than that sulfur smell in St. Pete after the Oz skit. It was at least good to see the story reported in the solemn manner which it was by someone who understood the gravity of it.

TONY DUNCAN
Royston, GA

After the July 1 firing of Ric Flair, I can only say one thing about how I feel; I give up. What else can I do with WCW? I personally hope they lose a promotional war to Pedicino and go bankrupt so Herd and Company cannot do anymore acts of stupidity. I thought people run a company to make money, but WCW cannot be wanting to make money by their actions. WCW without Flair is like pizza without cheese. And I thought it was bad when Tully Blanchard and Arn Anderson left the NWA.

BOBBY YATES
Asheboro, NC

Man, has it been a brutal three weeks for wrestling. First, the Zahorian trial, then WCW's franchise wrestler getting fired. Is Dusty Rhodes out of his mind? He has been waiting for the opportunity to pay back Flair ever since November of 1988 when TBS purchased the company and decided to build things around Flair. I will never forgive the Round Mound of Disgusting Sounds for this travesty. It is time for Rhodes and his partner in crime, Jim Herd, to do us all a favor and take up stamp collecting, or stomp collecting, because they sure as hell do not know the first clue about running a wrestling promotion in 1991. And if they do not leave, then Ted Turner should tell them to scam. And after that, he should relieve himself of a company which lost a reported \$6.5 million last year. Please, Joe Pedicino, do not let us down.

PAUL HANLIN JR.
Philadelphia, PA

Thank goodness that Ric Flair is gone. He was too old and stale to still be thought of as a great champion. Sure, he was a good wrestler and sold well, but let us face it, he was boring. He could not draw people like he thought he could. Everyone is saying that at the Clash in Knoxville, Flair vs. Eaton should have gone 35 to 40 minutes. Thank heavens it did not. If the match had gone that long, there would have been nobody left. As soon as the match started, people were leaving as it was. Not a few, but many. They were filing out of the building and even the guys in front of us left about five minutes into the bout. At the end of the match, half the crowd was gone. To have the World Champion of your organization wrestling while people get up and leave, what else could the WCW brass think? I wonder if Flair heard our chants of "Flair's Too Old" or "Banana Nose?" Maybe Jim Ross will go with Flair to the WWF so we will never have to listen to or see either of them again, or at least only in 5 to 10 minute clips. Cheers to WCW for getting rid of Flair and letting him go to the senior circuit, the WWF.

MIKE JOHNSON
RANDALL FANNING

The bottom line is that a rich man earning a high six figure salary was offered a lower six figure salary and did not accept it. From reading newsletters and listening to local radio shows, one would think we are dealing with earthquakes, famine, fatal diseases, mass homelessness, and other such subjects. Everybody wants to be the first to interview Flair. At the same time, no one has interviewed Chuck Austin, the WWF wrestler who was seriously injured at a TV taping. Most of the us, myself included, are guilty of paying too much attention to the trivial and trivializing things which really matter in life.

We need diversions and hobbies. We will continue to view, talk about, and write about wrestling and give it more emphasis than it deserves. At the same time we should be aware that there are questions in life which are more important than whether a match is worth **1/4 or **1/2. We ought to as Depeche Mode sings: "Get the Balance Right!" I admire Ray

Whebbe for combining wrestling community service in events such as "Wrestle for Shelter."

STEPHEN MEYERSON
Brooklyn, NY

I give WCW an A for effort and an F for delivery on last weekend's shows. I was shocked to see them admit the truth about Ric Flair's contract, but if they are going to hype it throughout the show, they had better not scroll it on the ads early in the show, not to mention them running twice on World Wide the same "live" clip. I know it had to be this way because of pre-taping, but this is just bush league.

Was it not heartwarming to see Randy Savage propose to Elizabeth? I wonder if Vince McMahon himself will perform the ceremony?

Why is WCW trying to convince us that the "Yellow Dog" is Brian Pillman. They have even gone as far as dubbing his voice over the "Yellow Dog's" interviews. Masks are for wrestlers who feel they have been wrongly suspended. Brian Pillman has too much honor and integrity to not honor his contract. The Yellow Dog is, in fact, the Russian legend, Chris Markoff.

Concerning the first Global TV show, it was an improvement over the same old USWA reruns, although I will miss Tom Prichard's commentary. Craig Johnson has improved miles beyond his first USWA broadcast and he has done his homework on the wrestlers. They are still very short on talent, but if they can perfect everything else, people will watch. One thing they have done that WCW has lost focus of is to bring interviews back to the arena. That is what made the old TBS shows special. The Patriot must really be Sid Vicious, since he is from "anywhere he damn well pleases."

One more thing. I like your editorial column and the new format, but your column is not "Below the Bottom Line" anymore. Maybe you should call it "The Last Word" or the "Final Word."

STEVE LOCKWOOD
Shoreview, MN

[WK: Ric Flair is no longer a "boy," the WWF no longer promotes "wrestling," Saturday Night Live in most markets is not "live," and "Late Night with David Letterman" is technically on in the "morning" here. But each of those traditions live on, and so will "Below the Bottom Line."]

TORCH TOP TEN LIST

From the home offices of Charles Russo in Staten Island, New York are the "Top Ten Pranks the WWF Wrestlers Will Play on Sid Justice When He Finally Wrestles on the Road..."

10) Tell him he has to be Bullwinkel the Moose to Jacques Rougeau's Dudley Do-Right in response to Canadian Mountie Association protests.

9) Hide his softball bat.
8) Have Winston raise his leg to Sid's gym bag.

7) Tell him Ric Flair is coming to get him.
6) One word - Wedgies!
5) Replace his steroids with vintage Hulk Hogan vitamins.

4) The old hand-in-the-warm-water-while-he's-sleeping trick.

3) Call him "Sidney, Sidney, with a face like a kidney!"

2) Lock him in a room alone with Ultimate Warrior.

...and the number one prank WWF wrestlers are going to play on Sid Justice...

1) Mail him a fake subpoena to appear at George Zahorian's appeal trial.

["Torch Top Ten List" is a regular feature in which all readers are welcome to send in their version of a top ten list, be it humorous, political, serious, or otherwise.]

"Something touched me deep inside - the day the music died." -Don McLean, American Pie, 1971.

On Tuesday, July 2, my good friend John Muse called with the news of Ric Flair's departure from World Championship Wrestling. Like almost every hardcore fan, we expressed disbelief, anger, and outrage with the sheer idiocy of it all. We discussed boycotting all future WCW events and even toyed with picketing the WCW cards and handing out informational flyers asking other fans to do the same. How anybody could make this decision - what years from now will still be heralded as the single worst move in wrestling - was a huge mystery to both of us. But given the track record of Jim Herd and Virgil Runnels, it was probably predictable.

It has been my feeling that WCW has had one foot in the toilet for over a year. With the firing of Ric Flair, the other foot just jumped in and the flush handle is within reach. Plenty of other writers will analyze the

CHRIS ZAVISA

"JAPANESE HIGHSPOTS"

possible future of WCW. I am not going to waste my space on it. To paraphrase the late Dr. Martin Luther King., it really does not matter to me anymore. Sure, I have a lot of respect for the work of Barry Windham, Arn Anderson, Brian Pillman, The Steiners, Bobby Eaton, and a few others. But it is clear that they are holdovers from another era. Herd and Rhodes are quickly making the initials WCW stand for "Wacky Cartoon Wrestling." Monstrosities like P.N. News, The Desperados, The Patriots, Black Blood, Big Josh, Jonnie B Badd, and Oz are fast becoming the rule in the promotion. For the first time I am glad they changed the name from the old National Wrestling Alliance. The NWA was far too good for Herd, Runnels, and his cartoon circus. Ric Flair, too, was far too good for WCW.

I am writing this column on July 7. You probably will not read this until July 18. As of today, Ric Flair does not have a job. It is not clear where he is going to wrestle. I guess it is possible that the following speculation will be a mute point by the time this is published, but as of today, Flair stands before a road with several forks in it. Since this column's theme is Japanese wrestling, let us take a look at Flair's options and how they will affect the Japanese wrestling world.

As far as Japan goes, Flair has three clear options. He can work for New Japan, All Japan, or Super World Sports. FMW would never pay for Flair's services. The various UWF-type promotions are not an alternative since Flair does not work their style. Ric Flair could make a good living working for either of these three promotions combined with independent dates around the United States. Let us look at each of the three Japanese promotions and their chances of landing Ric Flair as a regular wrestler.

NEW JAPAN: Flair's latest Japanese employer was Antonio Inoki's New Japan promotion. For a while there were strong rumors that Flair was to return to Japan in August and do a job for Fujinami. However, this never actually was the plan. New Japan had hoped for Sting, The Steiners, and El Gigante for their three night stand at Sumo Hall. They will not get Sting. They will not get the Steiners due to Scott's injury. Instead, joining Gigante will be Brian Pillman. If Inoki is fortunate, maybe Herd will send two of his hottest acts, P.N. News and Jonnie B. Badd to join them. Flair now holds and owns the NWA World Title belt and that could be a big reason for New Japan to work its own deal to keep Flair with their promotion.

Let us also remember that Ric Flair has only wrestled for New Japan once in his career. Outside of his appearance at the Tokyo Dome last March, Flair and New Japan have no history to fall back on. It seems remote that Flair would work his own deal with New Japan. Realistically, Flair and New Japan do not seem well matched for each other. Inoki and Choshu like to hire two types of imports. They like the younger, smaller types like Owen Hart, Chris Benoit, and Negro Casas. When they go for the bigger guys, they like to go really big and bring in the ones they can

RIC FLAIR'S OPTIONS IN JAPAN

IF FLAIR GOES TO TITAN, HOW WILL HE FIT-IN WITH SWS?

push as monsters. Van Vader and Scott Norton fit into this category. Flair seems to fit into the middle of these two extremes. Another problem would be suitable opponents. There is precious little left in a Flair vs. Fujinami series. Keiji Muto seems a natural opponent, but beyond him both Flair and New-Japan would have to do a lot of thinking about new directions. That seems unlikely.

ALL JAPAN: The second, far more likely option for Flair, is to cut a deal with Giant Baba's All Japan promotion. Flair has done eleven separate tours for Baba going back to the late 1970's and continuing into the years in which he held the NWA strap. Flair was a star in Japan and always did well there. His star faded quite a bit in the late 1980's after missing two scheduled tours, but quite a bit of his box office appeal was re-established by selling out the Tokyo Dome last March. The prospect of opponents in All Japan is wonderfully staggering. Jumbo Tsuruta is now the best wrestler in the Land of the Rising Sun. The prospect of Japan's best clashing with the U.S.'s best is extremely tantalizing. They had many outstanding bouts in the past and could well do so for the next several years. Then there is the prospect of the younger All Japan wrestlers like Mitsuahara Misawa, Kenta Kobashi, and Toshiaki Kawada. One very knowledgeable U.S. ring veteran returned from Japan last year and told friends that there was not a single wrestler in North America who could stay move for move with these three. It would be intriguing to see what Flair could do with these three.

Then there is the matter of Baba's other foreign imports. Baba's roster is far more impressive when considering opponents for Flair. Baba has an impressive foreign roster including Stan Hansen, Terry Gordy, Steve Williams, and if he remains an active wrestler, Terry Funk. Flair versus any of those men would be an easy four-star match and worthy of Baba's big shows at Budokan or Sumo Hall. Going to All Japan would be more of a sure thing and far less risky than going to New Japan.

There is another incentive for Flair to go with Baba and that is the opportunity to sock it to Herd, Runnels, and other WCW brass. All Japan is the main rival of Inoki's promotion. To jump to All Japan would cause a loss of face by Herd and WCW in future dealings with New Japan. It could be the straw that broke the camel's back. If Flair wants a measure of revenge, this could be one way to get it.

SUPER WORLD SPORTS: The rumor seems to be flying everywhere that Flair will end up working for Vince McMahon's World Wrestling Federation. Gee, I thought the "Match Made in Hell" was going to be done at SummerSlam. Flair working for Vince seems akin to Bruce Springsteen singing in the center ring of the Ringling Brothers circus, or Pablo Picasso painting covers for Marvel Comics, or Stephen Spielberg directing episodes of the Dallas TV show. But money talks and Vince certainly has a truckload of it. Flair has gotten accustomed to the big income and the lifestyle that goes with it. How many wrestling promotions outside of Titan can provide that for Flair?

If Ric Flair ends up joining Vince's circus, his Japanese work has been determined for him. The WWF is allied with Megame Optical's SWS promotion. SWS is built around Genichiro Tenryu. Flair and Tenryu have worked many times before and Flair is just the kind of opponent that Tenryu would welcome. While Flair would not be the salvation for SWS, he could be an important ingredient in rebuilding the promotion. Besides Tenryu, Flair could work

against many other Japanese wrestlers including Geoege Takano, Naoki Sano, and Yoshiaki Fujiwara. In addition, he would be free to have bouts in Japan against some of Titan's better workers such as DiBiase, Savage, Hennig, Steamboat, and Michaels. Flair would probably be allowed much more freedom in the ring in Japan than Vince would allow him in the United States. His best bouts against fellow Titan workers would probably come in SWS rings.

The bottom line here is that Ric Flair's decision will not be based on Japan, whatever he decides, appearing in Japan will only be an extra: a way of supplementing his income if he goes the independent route and a way of working good matches if he signs with Titan. Whatever Ric Flair decides, I join the thousands of other fans in thanking him for a decade and a half of excellence and wish him all the best for his future.

BENTO BOX...

YEAR END AWARDS:

Among those you may want to consider at the half-way point towards the year-end awards are the following: Worst Wrestler: The Canadian Giant who recently made his debut as Bill Eadie's partner in New Japan rings. The Giant wore an outfit similar to Eadie's, but his trunks were of the longer, blousier boxer style. The result was he looked like he was wearing a cheap plastic mini-skirt. His work matched the ridiculous outfit. This guy is one of the worst.

Match of the Year: The May 6 New Japan Fan Appreciation show from Korakuen Hall featuring a 28 minute match between Hiroshi Hase and Jushin Thunder Lyger. While I have only seen this on hand-held footage filmed by a fan in the stands, it is clearly the favorite at this point even eclipsing the great 6-man series between Tsuruta and Misawa's teams.

Best Move: Orihara's moonsault flip off the top rope to the arena floor is so far beyond belief I cannot imagine anybody duplicating it.

Rookie of the Year: Ishin Riki of SWS has been very impressive in the four or five outings I have seen him in. It is rare for a Japanese rookie to get TV exposure, so this may be one of the rare years that a Japanese wrestler has a real chance at the award.

TERRY GORDY & OWEN HART: A really pleasant surprise was in watching the efforts of both Terry Gordy and Owen Hart in their most recent Japanese tours. Hart looked great in the New Japan Junior tourney taking several wicked bumps and displaying all of his well-known offensive moves. Several of his bouts were in the four star range. Terry Gordy has looked better than at any time in the last five years. In May and June he was involved in a whole series of bouts, both in singles and tag competition that were all three stars or better. The last five minutes of his June 1st loss to Mitsuahara Misawa were as good as it gets with one near fall after another. Gordy took a very punishing elbow smash to the face to set up the pin. If his work stays at this high level, he could crack the top twenty-five at year's end.

TV FORMAT CHANGE HIGHLIGHTS ROOKIES: New-Japan TV has made a change in its format. At the program's end, they give several minutes to highlight several undercard bouts. This gives viewers a chance to see several wrestlers who otherwise never get on TV. The one drawback was the recent title change in which Jushin Thunder Lyger re-won the strap from Norio Honaga. Instead of showing the match as one of their main events, they only showed the last minute as part of the highlight package.



RIC FLAIR WITH TATSUMI FUJINAMI'S DAUGHTER
(Photo courtesy Mike Lano)

A TALK WITH CACTUS JACK

DISCUSSION OF CAREER GOALS AND UPCOMING PHILLY BOUT

Cactus Jack has the match of his life coming up against Eddie Gilbert in Philadelphia, a two out of three match contest on August 3rd. Cactus Jack wants to make it something special. In the following and final installment of a May 31, 1991 interview with Cactus Jack, Cactus discusses the August 3rd match in Philadelphia, his goals in wrestling, and his goals in life, and how those goals over his short career.

WADE KELLER: August 3 features a unique contest against Eddie Gilbert in Philadelphia. Tell me about that bout.

CACTUS JACK: It's the best of three falls, but it is going to be three different matches at three different

TORCH TALK

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

times in the card. The first match on the card is a falls count anywhere match. The second fall of the match is right before intermission and it's a stretcher match. The third fall is the main event, a cage match. So I'm in a position where my goal for that night is to have the best falls-count-anywhere match ever, the best stretcher match ever, and although there's been thousands of cage matches, the best cage match ever.

KELLER: And does Eddie have the same goal?

CACTUS: I would like to think so. He really looks forward to these matches more than I do and I wish we could wrestle on a regular basis. I mean I'm thinking through different things that we can do in our time. Believe me Wade, if any of your readers take the time out to go to that August 3rd show, I would really like to think that I can send them home thinking they've never seen anything like that. I can't see why the NWA or WWF or All-Japan... why I'm not working full time somewhere. But if I was Jim Herd or if I was Vince McMahon, I would seriously think to myself, if this guy is doing these type of things at an independent show, what kinds of things would he be willing to do on a major show? And Wade, the answer is: I don't know.

KELLER: You might explode just trying to fathom the anticipation?

CACTUS: Like I said, sometimes I'll be thinking about these matches and I can barely contain myself in the car. My face starts trembling and I start doing interviews in my head; not out loud, but in my head. I realize that there are people that thought I wouldn't be able to last six months in the business, people putting me down for not being so-called smart to the business, but a lot of those guys are back washing cars in Tennessee, while I believe my best days are still ahead of me. I came to the conclusion that a lot of people felt I got a raw deal in the NWA and that Ole Anderson didn't like my specific style, but like I said at the beginning, a lot of things happen for a reason and if I were to have stayed in the NWA and continued to make the good money I was making, I think I would still be part of a crowd and I think any potential I had as a main eventer in this country would be over. Let me put it this way. I'm engaged now. Three weeks after I left the NWA, I met my future wife. We're working together in a pretty successful modeling agency. I now have another new profession as a second-income consultant. I'm planning for my future. I used to have one goal in mind, which was to be a wrestler, but now I have more. And now that I have more goals in mind I think it's actually made me a better wrestler because I don't have to worry about getting hurt and worrying about where my next meal is coming from because I have things to fall back on. Someone once said that if you have things to fall back on, you're going to fall back on them, you're going to cut back your goals. To me it just means I can work harder.

KELLER: And take more risks?

CACTUS: Yeah, take more risks. So maybe I should thank Ole Anderson. I think maybe your readers view this as me becoming cocky, but when I was in the NWA, I believed in myself that yeah, I could do certain things. But now it takes a lot more belief in yourself to think you can actually get people out of their homes to buy tickets. I've never proven to

anyone, including myself, that I could sell ticket one. So I wonder, maybe I'm setting myself up for a great disappointment August 3rd, but even if three of your readers come in from different parts around the country, and I hope that certain people will, and I would like to be able to guarantee them possibly the best match they can possibly see... for a fat guy.

KELLER: Some may take you up on it. How is your body holding up?

CACTUS: The only problem I have now - I don't know if you saw the match I had with Jumbo Tsuruta - I took a pretty bad bump off the ring apron and I guess I tore either the muscle or the ligament off my bone. It's the kind of thing where the muscle will go back on as far as I know and what people have told me, but it won't attach firmly. So now it's well past two months since I hurt it originally and it's at its worst now. I wrestled with some bad ribs in Aruba and Curaso and another island and I had what I thought were some of my best matches. When you can't rely on your old standbys, it forces you to think. And believe me, I can have a good match without taking a single bump if I had to.

KELLER: It's like the old saying that I just made up: An artist creates his best works when his mold breaks.

CACTUS: That's good. Yeah, I like that. So I'm worried about how soon my body's going to heal. That's why I'd love to wrestle in Japan because you're not in a position where it's the end of the road because you're going to have a break in two or three weeks. I feel if I went to Japan I could wrestle for maybe the next ten years. If I went to the WWF or the NWA, maybe it would only be three or five years. I've surprised myself and probably a few fans in staying as injury-free as I have. I mean, when you ask me what my proudest achievement is in wrestling, I think it is that I've only missed four matches in six years and that was due to bronchitis and a staph infection.

KELLER: Considering your style there's no question that's amazing.

CACTUS: Yeah, I'm really proud of that.

KELLER: What is your newest memorable moment?

CACTUS: I think the newest memorable moment is the whole thing that went down at the barbed wire match against Eddie Gilbert. Afterward, I legitimately could not stand up. I was stuck in the barbed wire ropes so long and the barbed wire was stuck in my face and I have pictures of it, and it's kind of gruesome... no, it's very gruesome. Barbed wire is sticking in my face and nobody was there to help me. Every time a wrestler came out to help me, Eddie Gilbert was putting me down. I had barbed wire sticking in my face and in my neck. I read somewhere that I had suffered terrible facial wounds, but actually you can't even tell anything happened because I never pulled out. Had I pulled out, my face would have been a disaster. But I waited long enough in the ropes with the ropes cinched around my neck for people to help me get out, then I pulled the wire out of my face. There were just tiny holes. It could have been really bad, and the feeling of total helplessness was terrible. Here we were in front of possibly the hardest core crowd in the country and I have my future wife next to me holding my head in her lap and no one was laughing. When I say I couldn't stand up, I mean it. My knees were buckling due to the cutting off the oxygen. I think anatomically it was the old sleeper theory where the oxygen is cut off from the brain. All the wrestlers were huddled around me and I almost felt guilty feeling better. The truth was, I was pretty satisfied with myself.

KELLER: Does it scare you that something like that could happen again where in ten minutes you're not going to feel better? Or is that just part of the

thrill?

CACTUS: No, to me, part of it is the thrill. Part of the thrill is knowing that maybe if that match had taken place as part of an NWA or WWF pay-per-view, that they would do big business as a result of it.

KELLER: That doesn't surprise me that that is your most memorable moment because a year ago your most memorable moment was a time in Texas when after one of your matches people were calling the hospital wanting to know if you were okay when you actually walked away from the building after the event.

CACTUS: All of my great moments have come... let me put it this way, none of my great moments have ever come as a result of getting my arm raised. It's always been when people call the hospital or wrestlers call acting like I should be dead saying, "My best wishes."

KELLER: Have you developed more cynicism toward the business or more enthusiasm since I last talked to you?

CACTUS: I actually think more enthusiasm. Wade, it's like I wondered why people were getting trips to Japan when I thought I was more qualified. And I wonder why people are going to the NWA and the WWF when I believe I am more qualified. But I'm living everyday, I'm happy every day.

KELLER: I was going to ask, do you believe you are the happiest person in the wrestling business today?

CACTUS: I have some anger that comes out during my interviews, and it's legitimate. And it's great to get it off my back and it makes for great interviews and then it's out of me. I think a lot of people are going to be surprised at what I can do as far as a promotional interview. And yeah, I may be one of the happiest men in the wrestling business because I know I'm just waiting for my chance. And I know that when I get it I'm gonna finally be able to do something with it.

KELLER: If you had your choice, would you rather have a very consistent run in Japan at the top or near the top or would you rather get that thrill of the interview facet of wrestling through a run with either WCW or the WWF as a main event wrestlers?

CACTUS: That's a toss up. There are so many benefits to wrestling full time in Japan; there's so many benefits to wrestling full time in the NWA. I still think I've got a lot of room to grow and I'm not just a wrestler now; I have other things that I can do. Some of my best moments have been on John Arezzi's show, trading banter with Paul E. and others. Jimmy Comette was co-hosting with Joel Goodhart on his radio show when I was on, and when a Comette tells you that was the funniest seven minutes he's heard without someone telling a joke and you have Goodhart tell you that he was stuffing things in his mouth to keep from laughing on the air when the context of what I was saying wasn't funny. Like I said, when you can get the master to really appreciate what you're saying, that means a lot.

KELLER: On that note, I will let you go. Thanks for your time. I and the Torch's readers appreciate your willingness to talk on record so openly so they learn more about what goes through the mind of a not-so-typical pro wrestler.

CACTUS: Thanks for listening, Wade.

UPCOMING "TORCH TALKS"...

BILL WATTS: THE STATE OF THE BUSINESS
PAUL ORNDORF: CAREER OF THOUGHTS
MUCHAM SINGH: WCW DAYS AND HERD
JERRY LAWLER: THE STATE OF WRESTLING
JIM CORNETTE: CAREER MEMORIES



THE WWF'S STEROID-TESTING PRESS RELEASE OVERSTRETCHES THE BOUNDS OF BELIEVABILITY

Press releases are always great fun. Most press releases unintentionally endorse freedom of the press in this country. Without journalists who get press releases consistently in the mail and on their FAX machines, the mass public would be left with each company's individual self-serving version of everything that happens in the world. Interpretation of press releases is similar to contract negotiations. In contract negotiations, both parties enter with a price, neither expecting to get what they want, but hoping for something close to what they ask for. The

BELOW THE BOTTOM LINE

By: Wade Keller
Editor/Publisher

negotiations take place and a compromise is usually reached. Sometimes, though, one side initially asks for an amount of money the other side sees as unreasonable. This ends up with both parties getting stubborn and defensive and then arbitration results.

The WWF, if the press releases represented contract renegotiating, would go to arbitration every time.

The WWF continues to prove to be the master of manipulation, but lately reaching the point of absurdity. Their press releases should be studied in college "Press Release 101" courses. WCW could also stand to take a few lessons from the WWF.

Their latest press release concerning their new steroid-testing policy is fantastic. It could not have been written differently and still been as convincing that they were sincere and concerned with the welfare of their employees and their wholesome image.

Now is when the press comes in. Without the press to interpret what "they really meant," each individual would be left with the hefty task. Some journalists will read the WWF's press release and buy every word of it. Those are the same journalists that accepted the first offer their newspaper gave them regarding their salary. If I were running a newspaper and a prospective employee did not challenge my salary offer, the prospective employee would lose a few points. If they do not bargain here, they may not challenge press releases either.

One example where there is need for interpretation is the following line from the press release: "As a responsible leader in family sports entertainment..."

Okay, this is not a lie. They are the leader in "family sports entertainment." They invented the term and no one yet has claimed to also promote "family

sports entertainment," so while they are the leader, they are the leader in a one man race. Now, if that statement was written a bit differently, by someone less knowledgeable about the art of the press release, they likely would have lied by writing, "We are a responsible leader in sports in setting good examples for children." That line is just waiting to be chewed, mutilated, and spindled by anyone familiar with the WWF.

The next line is a lie. "...the World Wrestling Federation since 1987 has had the most comprehensive and well-enforced drug program in all of professional sports."

Here we have a problem. They slipped a bit. They should have said, "in all of professional sports *entertainment*." Then they would be correct. Considering that while the WWF has tested for cocaine use and suspended wrestlers in the past for failing such tests, other major league sports have tested for a lot more than cocaine, including steroids. This exaggeration is just a sign of insecurity. It gets better.

"Now the WWF program will be expanded to include the most comprehensive steroid policy in sports as well."

That is good. It makes up for the above miscue. If the WWF plans to actually run a successful, strict, comprehensive steroid testing program, then the above exaggeration is okay. Their intentions for future policy appear to be good. Who is going to dispute something that has not happened yet, right?

Basil DeVito's statement, however, is a total misrepresentation of what the WWF actually is. And he gets paid the big bucks to say stuff like this: "The WWF has always stood for positive family-oriented entertainment."

I cite a few examples to refute his statement: First, Ultiamte Warrior, at the time the number two babyface and World Champion, spent the last several months of his title reign beating and stripping Sensational Sherri. The wholesome family entertainment quickly turned into a peek show as Sherri stood in the ring in her underwear leaning every which way, revealing more than most parents wanted their kids to see.

Second, the blatant exploitation of the Persian Gulf War. As troops were dying in the Middle East in honor of their country, Hulk Hogan was waging his own phoney war against a make-believe character, turncoat Sgt. Slaughter. The goal was to sell tickets to

this simplified, simulation of a war as fans were to flock to see money-hungry Hogan beat money-hungry Sgt. Slaughter all in order to ultimately make money-hungry Vince McMahon money. Hogan even visited military bases for the sole purpose of showing the footage to promote the simulated, simplified war at Wrestlemania.

Third, irresponsible stereotypes of Slick, The Orient Express, General Adnon, The Mountie, and Virgil. Part of the definition of "positive family oriented entertainment" is not encouraging masses of lily white kids from yuppie families to boo and jeer oversimplified, inaccurate, outdated stereotypes of Japanese, Afro-Americans, Arabs, and Canadians.

The press release continues, "This innovative policy will ensure that our athletes adhere to the high standards..." That is just happy talk. "Innovative," "ensure," and "high-standards." The recipient of this press release does not know why the policy is innovative, how it will not fail as the NFL steroid testing has. The reader does not know how this new policy will "ensure" anything. And the reader certainly has to wonder what the "high standards" are.

And in conclusion, "...in order to preserve their place in the world as worthy role models all over the world." I guess the intent here is to scare some journalists away from questioning the sincerity of a company's press release which represents international role models. However, one look at their crew and one sees a lot of men who look like steroid-infested beasts and a lot of stereotypical characters and a good guy who beats his opponents with a night stick and a hero who beats up women and a world where every dispute is settled through fighting.

This steroid policy is supposed to preserve their wrestlers' places in this world as worthy role models? Nice try.

By the time the typical journalist who is oblivious to the world of pro wrestling is finished reading this, the WWF would like them to believe at least some of it.

In this case, the WWF may have gone too far, been too outrageous with their claims. This time, the press release-press negotiations are going to go to arbitration and the WWF is going to lose.

The WWF is the master of persuasively exaggerating on press releases. This time, they stretched believability a little too far, thus believability is likely going to break.

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