



Cubed Circle Newsletter 194 -- It's the other Happiest Time of the Year, 25th G1 Climax Is Here!

We (well, me, anyway), are back at the CCN headquarters in Johannesburg for another issue looking at the 2015 G1 Climax, which kicks off on NJPW World this Monday (!), Ben Carass reviews Mid-South from 1982 with an appearance from Killer Karl Kox, RAW with the debuts of Charlotte, Becky Lynch, and Sasha Banks, as well as Monday's edition of RAW!

– *Ryan Clingman, Cubed Circle Newsletter Editor*

NJPW Set for Colossal 25th G1 Climax

Prior to New Japan's October 2012 iPPV debut, King of Pro-Wrestling, the supply of the product was generally left to uploaders on various file-sharing sites. Often times, major shows such as the Tokyo Dome show and the finals of the G1 Climax were only made available weeks or even months later -- much of the 2012 G1 Climax was only made available a good year or so after airing. In fact, up until quite recently, various shows and matches from some of the more recent pre-2013 G1 Climax shows were lost to foreign audiences for what seemed to be the foreseeable future. Thankfully, however, with the success of King of Pro-Wrestling, and subsequent internet-pay-per-views, including the seminal 2013 Tokyo Dome show, New Japan made the 2013 G1 Climax the more accessible than it had ever been before.

For 150 dollars, fans outside of Japan could not only view every show of the 23rd G1 Climax -- in a year that saw a widespread rise in the popularity of the product -- but, could also view it live, as well as on-demand during the course of the month. Even with the steep price and inability for fans to purchase individual shows, the package was widely praised for supplying the non-Japanese audience a platform to view shows that would otherwise surface in a late and inconvenient fashion, if at all.

What received higher praise still was the tournament itself, which featured some of the best shows and matches of easily the last five years of Japanese pro-wrestling. Tomohiro Ishii and Katsuyori Shibata produced what some will remember as New Japan's Frye/Takayama, with Nakamura and Ibushi following in the main event of what I regarded as the show of the year over the 2013 Tokyo Dome show, one of the better shows of the last several years. Naito and Tanahashi battled in a heated final, and Ishii upset Tanahashi in a classic outing. Many hailed this tournament as one of the greatest of the last several decades, perhaps even of all time. This was despite many criticising Gedo and Jado's use of parity booking throughout the tournament -- a criticism, which, given the modern booking history of the G1, may have been unwarranted -- and injuries to both Hiroyoshi

Tenzan and Hirooki Goto mid-way through the tournament.

When the 2014 schedule was announced, with bigger brackets and a highly ambitious final scheduled for the Seibu Dome, just out of Tokyo, several concerns crept up. The most obvious, at least at the time, was how the company was going to fill a 35,000 seat building, even if Sumo Hall had sold-out fairly quickly over the past couple of years. Another concern was that many of the participants, particularly the older and physically worn stars such as Satoshi Kojima, Yuji Nagata, Hiroyoshi Tenzan, and even younger performers like Tanahashi and Goto were going to handle an even more gruelling and intense schedule, and if they did, what kind of effect it would have on the company going forward with an injured roster. But, what followed during the 21 long day tour over 12 shows was a tournament that saw positive booking and layout amendments, and produced a bevy of the year's best matches. Shibata and Honma had what may have very well been match of the 2014, whilst Styles and Suzuki, Nakamura and Okada, and a host of others did the same. Booking wise, the tournament saw a breaking from parity, distinct from years prior, which led to a welcome change, despite the success of the previous booking model.



This year, following the launch of New Japan World, the promotion looks to outdo themselves once more by upping the number of dates to 19, and only presenting five G1 matches per show, allowing for longer matches and competitors to rest in-between events. Each night will be exclusively A or B block, with non-active participants performing on the undercard in tags opposite their opponents for the next night. This model carries with it some strong advantages, not the least of which is that the performers, whilst being required to work 10 tournament matches minimum, as in 2014, will do so over 28 days, providing far more time to rest and avoid injuries. Aside from the obvious, this also produces several benefits for fans, not the least of which will be longer, more memorable matches, with a lesser chance of a post-G1 malaise .

For as much as is said of New Japan's lack of new talent, which may become a serious issue in future years if not rectified, this year's tournament, as in years prior, begets a number of fresh, and

in some cases original, match-ups. Katsuyori Shibata will battle Kota Ibushi on the 29th in Fukuoka (an admittedly unfortunate venue for an otherwise potential match of the year), Styles will too match-up with Shibata on the 20th's opening night semi-main in Hokkaido, under Kota Ibushi versus Hiroshi Tanahashi! Naito will face one of my, admittedly, favourite wrestlers in Shibata, whilst Tomoaki Honma, who too is a member of that category, will work opposite Shinsuke Nakamura at Korakuen Hall on August 9th.

We have also been presented with rematches of some of the best matches of years past, Nakamura and Okada will do battle for only the third time on the second night at Sumo Hall, whilst Tanahashi and Shibata, who ended their rivalry last year, will reignite it for a single night in Yokohama on August 8th. AJ Styles will also work with two of his better G1 opponents from last year, Tetsuya Naito and Hiro Yoshi Tenzan on the 29th and 8th respectfully. This will thankfully take place before the unfortunate inevitable demise of poor old Tenzan at the hands of Shibata on August 11th at Korakuen.

Unfortunately, the Killer Elite Squad and Minoru Suzuki are too preoccupied with their NOAH invasion to take part in this year's tournament, which is a shame, as Suzuki always produces some of the better matches of the tournament with the most unexpected of opponents. Fortunately, whilst Doc Gallows, Toru Yano, and Bad Luck Fale will still be involved in the tournament, Michael Elgin will be brought in this year, and the aforementioned Kota Ibushi will appear alongside his replacement, Tomoaki Honma.

This year's tournament will be a true test for Elgin, who has shown promise since his 2010 ROH debut, even producing a classic with Davey Richards in 2012, has never broken out as a great individual worker in the eyes of many, even though he can clearly be carried to a great match. If Elgin, who has been pushing for a New Japan run for well over a year, is able to pull out some great matches with the likes of Nakamura, Ishii, Nagata, Goto, Kojima, and Honma, then this may very well be a breakout period for him. Likewise, if he produces sub-par (by G1 standards), matches with these performers, and doesn't connect with the audience, he may face New Japan booking problems in future. I doubt the later case will come to pass, however.

One of the biggest questions heading into the 25th annual G1 Climax is the same as most that have come before, and that is, of course, a question of who will win the tournament. The favourite, at least at this point, seems to be Shinsuke Nakamura. Nakamura-Okada, prior to last year's G1 final seemed to be a match Gedo and Jado had been saving for a Tokyo Dome show following a long and involved build. But, with their G1 match delivering and leaving room for another match with a championship on the line, the 2016 Dome show may very well be the place for their first major title bout. The pair will, however, face one another on the first Sumo Hall show, which would strongly indicate the result of that match deciding the winner of the B block. They could book a draw, although a Nakamura win leading a Dome match is my strongest hunch.

An Okada victory would, at first glance, make little sense, but given that the Seibu Dome match was their first major encounter, and Okada came out the victor, the very long-term direction may be to have Nakamura go 0-2 against Okada in major G1 matches, leading to a 2016 G1 victory, perhaps a third match prior to that, and then Nakamura-Okada at the 2017 Tokyo Dome, in what depending on the state of the company at that point, may be their first Dome sell-out in well over a decade.

Taking the more probable scenario, I suspect to see either AJ Styles or Kota Ibushi win the A-block. There is already a pre-written story with Ibushi losing to Nakamura twice before going on to defeat

him either in the finals of this year's G1, or in a fourth encounter. However, a Styles/Nakamura match is fresh enough that it may be their final direction, especially given that Styles and Tanahashi will be headlining the first of three Sumo Hall shows in the last of the A block matches.

Last year I predicted an Shibata/Okada final, but it would seem that, at least for the time being, Gedo sees Shibata as an upper-tier star, but not one at the very top. Nakamura/Ibushi and Nakamura/Styles then seem to be the most likely finals, and given the placement of Styles and Tanahashi on the first Sumo Hall show I have to lean ever so slightly towards Nakamura/Styles in the finals, which is most certainly a tantalising final match, especially given the lack of interference in Styles' G1 matches last year.

As for where this year's tournament will rank amongst the great G1 tournaments of the past is difficult to say. There is definitely a potential for this tournament, given the ability for matches to be built to between shows, as well as the extra time for tournament matches, number of promising pairings, and three Sumo Hall shows, to surpass the spectacular tournaments of 2013 and 2014.

RAW Ramblings – July 13th 2015.

Philips Arena: Atlanta, GA.

Ben Carass.

This was one of those rare weeks when I didn't watch RAW live and I have to say it made for a much easier and far less taxing viewing experience. I could fast forward through the commercials and skip all the recaps, which takes a good 40 minutes off the gruelling three hour marathon. We got more good segments than usual and a pretty solid sell for the main event of BattleGround, although the show did have its fair share of the customary useless filler.

Main event segment was a contract signing with **Brock Lesnar** and **Seth Rollins**. They set it up in the opening segment by having **Lesnar & Heyman** start the show; **Paul** did his typical big pitch promo to sell the PPV then **Kane & Rollins** interrupted him. **Kane** eventually booked the contract signing after some banter. Later, they shot a couple of skits backstage with **Rollins** telling **Kane** that if his plan went wrong it would be on his head. The contract signing was the same deal we always get, but it was executed very well. **Heyman** noticed **Rollins** trying to reach under the table for something and **Brock** pulled out an Axe-handle. **Brock** played Cool Hand Luke and set the Axe-handle on the table and offered **Rollins** a chance to take it. **Rollins**, very slowly, edged towards the handle and picked it up; **Lesnar** flipped the table onto **Rollins** and big brawl broke out. **Kane & Rollins** got the better of **Lesnar** for a while and tried to pedigree him on the steps, however **Brock** made his comeback and hit **Kane** with an F5 on the floor then chased **Rollins** into the crowd again. **Brock** came back for **Kane** and smashed the steps across his ankle, much like **Kane & Undertaker** did to **Vince McMahon** in the Fall of 98, presumably writing **Kane** out of the storyline along with **J&J**. **Rollins** returned after **Brock** had left and he buried **Kane** for having a stupid plan then kicked him in the injured leg. The announcers played up that **Rollins** would be on his own against **Lesnar**, so either **Brock** is winning the title or the **Authority** is going to bring some new guys into the stable. – **Rollins & Lesnar** played their roles perfectly during the deal. **Brock** can even make the trite old contract signing seem interesting by just be being there and has some of the best damn facials in the business.

John Cena's US Open Challenge was once again fun, if not a little head-scratching from a booking standpoint. **Rusev, Kevin Owens & Cesaro** all came out and the **Authority**, during the break, booked them in a three-way to see who got to face **Cena**. Now with three mega talented guys, and since **Owens & Cesaro** have worked together thousands of times, the match wasn't as good as you

would have expected. It was kind of rough early on and at some points **Rusev** seemed a little lost; **Cesaro** was lying on his back, loudly calling spots to **Rusev** at one point. Despite the clunkiness, it was a FRESH match and was still fun to watch, and it eventually did turn into a good match. They did a tower of doom and lots of big spots; **Cesaro** gave **Rusev & Owens** a double German suplex. **Owens** walked out about 13 minutes in and left **Rusev & Cesaro** to go another 10 on their own. **Rusev** gave **Cesaro** a suplex onto the apron, but for a minute it looked like they were going to do the **Kobashi/Akiyama** suplex to the floor. Match got a lot better with just two guys in the ring and by the end the people were standing, going nuts and yelling for **Rusev** to tap-out to the Sharpshooter. Finish was a little flat, as **Rusev** just hit a superkick out of nowhere to get the win. **John Cena**, who was on commentary throughout and was his usual robotic self, got in the ring to defend his title against a man who just wrestled for 24 minutes! **Rusev** sold like he was exhausted and beaten down; **Cena** pretty much wiped the floor with him for 4 minutes. **Rusev** then came back like a huge fighting babyface and with his last ounce of fight got **Cena** in the Accolade and almost won the title! Think about that for a minute. **John Cena** beat up a man who could barely stand, a man that fought a war and beat two other people then **Rusev** got a huge babyface spot where he nearly won the belt. !SDRAWKCABSSA. **Owens** hit the ring and broke up the Accolade for the DQ then gave **Rusev** the powerbomb of doom and yelled at **Cena** that he was the only person who was going to beat him for the US title. – I don't get the booking at all, but it was an enjoyable segment nonetheless.



There was an NXT invasion of-sorts with, **Becky Lynch, Charlotte & Sasha Banks** all debuting in the same segment and angle **The Bellas** were out with **Alicia Fox** and **Nikki** cut a characteristically dull promo about running the Diva's division. **Stephanie McMahon** showed up and put **Team Bella** in their place, by noting that she owned the WWE. **Steph** claimed a "revolution" was occurring in "Women's Soccer, Tennis & the UFC" and said it was time for WWE to do the same. She called out **Paige** and said **Paige** had been outnumbered for too long and buried the rest of the division by saying there was not enough competition. Might Overlord **Steph** then introduced **Becky Lynch & Charlotte**, who stood side-by-side with **Paige**. **Naomi & Tamina** came down and complained that they weren't getting a fair shot, so **Steph** gave them a new playmate too and **Sasha Banks** showed up. She probably got the biggest reaction of the three, although a lot of people did the "Woooo" for **Charlotte**. So after Principal, Mrs **McMahon** put all the kids into teams and told

them to play nice, an enormous nine-way schmoz broke out. I'm sure you can imagine what a nine-way women's brawl looked like; it wasn't pretty at all. They didn't have the timing down to make all the rapid fire moves have impact, although, all things considered, it could have been much worse than it was as somebody could have easily got hurt. It ended with the three new Divas putting their holds on the **Bellas & Alicia**; **Becky** used the Shirome, **Charlotte** used the Figure-Eight and **Sasha** put **Fox** in the Banks Statement. – The fans were into this and chanted, “this is awesome”, however it really wasn't. First, **Stephanie** coming out and playing babyface mother of all these girls and taking credit for bringing in the new Divas was typical **McMahon** megalomania, but I guess we shouldn't be surprised. The big issue is already they have homogenised three of the best women they have in the entire company by bringing them all in at once into this mess of a storyline with **Team Bella**. I don't care if they think **Charlotte** has the “right look”, wanting to bring “credibility” to the Diva's division and not building up the daughter of **RIC FLAIR** with weeks of vignettes is just utterly idiotic. Same goes for **Sasha**; she's (at the time of writing) the current NXT Women's champion, but is now just another sidekick for **Naomi**. They tried, but on week one, they really dropped the ball.



Away from the Important Stuff: Randy Orton & Ryback beat **Big Show & Sheamus** in a dull 15 minute match that they billed as, “the WWE's version of the All-Star Game!” – Laughable. **Ryback** pinned **Sheamus** after an RKO and his new ugly splash off the top. **Dean Ambrose vs. Bray Wyatt** was booked but never took place because **Roman Reigns** attacked **Wyatt** in the aisle before the match. **Reigns** beat **Wyatt** up and hit a Superman punch, but **Bray** nailed **Reigns** with his magic lantern and ran away. – This feud is rotten. **Prime Time Players & Mark Henry** over **New Day** in a bad 7 minute six-man. **Henry** pinned **Woods** with the World's Strongest Slam. The running gag that is the **King Barrett/R-Truth** feud continued. **Truth** pinned **Barrett** in 3 minutes then put on his foil crowd and bath towel robe. –Sucked. Oh, and they're wrestling again in the “Battle for the Crown” during the BattleGround pre-show. **Stardust** was back on TV for the first time since the passing of **Dusty Rhodes**. He cut one of his usual wacky pre-tapes and beat **Neville** in a nothing 4 minute match. The people wanted to cheer for **Stardust**, but he worked as a heel and the crowd was dead because of it. **Neville** came off like such a geek here.

Since this was the Go-Home show for BattleGround, and I can't remember off the top of my head what half the matches are, let's have a look what is booked for the card.



Pre-Show: Battle for the Crown: King Barrett vs. R-Truth. – No matter who wins this match I just hope this bubonic plague of a feud goes away after Sunday. I'll go with Barrett, because I mean COME ON.

IC Championship: Ryback (C) vs. Big Show vs. Miz. – I'm expecting this to be hideous. Miz is the athlete in the match; think about that! Ryback has only had the belt just over a month, so it wouldn't really do him any favours to drop it here. Show certainly doesn't need the belt; they could go with Miz, but that just turns the title into an even bigger joke than it already is. Ryback is my pick.

Tag Team Championship: Prime Time Players (C) vs. New Day. – Even though, like Ryback, the PTPs have only had the straps a month, I could see them switching back to New Day here. I mean Titus got his nice little run for winning that Dad of the Year gimmick, but the PTPs are simply not long-term championship calibre performers. I'll FEEL THA POWA and say, New Day.

Randy Orton vs. Sheamus. – Is there a match other than maybe John Cena/Kane or Cena/Big Show that evokes such apathy as Orton vs. Sheamus? Both guys are great workers, but together they just seem to have a weird negative chemistry that automatically sucks the life out of any arena they are booked together in. Sheamus is entering the just won MITB and now I'm doing a million jobs part of the year, so Orton is probably going to win.

Roman Reigns vs. Bray Wyatt. – Remember when Roman Reigns was going to be the next John Cena? Well, I guess he still is going to be, however terrible feuds like this are doing him no favours whatsoever. I could actually see this program developing into a long running series of matches in which Wyatt continuously puts over Reigns. What else are they going to do to make the guy look like Superman, more matches with Big Show? That would be absolute death. I'm going for Reigns.

US Championship: John Cena (C) vs. Kevin Owens. – This one is tricky. We might know more

when the NXT Taping results come out on Thursday. If Owens is all over those shows, hyping a rematch with Finn Balor then I'm not sure if they will put the US title on him. On the otherhand, with Owens coming off big losses to Cena & Balor, he logically almost certainly has to beat Cena for the championship. I'll say WWE will do the right thing and go with Owens.

WWE World Heavyweight Championship: Seth Rollins (C) vs. Brock Lesnar. – Another tough choice. I would just have Brock go in there, destroy Rollins and regain the title, but I don't think that is what they are going to do. A Rollins/HHH SummerSlam match has been rumoured for months, but if Rollins wins then does he defend against HHH and go face? It seems way too early for that and HHH should not be challenging for the belt anyway. If Lesnar wins then you would think SummerSlam would be a rematch with Rollins, so that would leave HHH out in the cold. Maybe Vince has scrapped everything and they have something brilliant up their sleeve, but I doubt it. Again, I'd have Lesnar win via brutal ass-kicking, however I suspect we're going to get some kind of screwy finish that will see Rollins retain.

Wow. I am not looking forward to this show at all. The top two matches should be fun, but the rest of the card just looks like a below average RAW. Thankfully it's G1 season and we're all in for some outstanding wrestling over the next month to take away the WWE summertime blues.

WWE NXT – July 15th 2015
Full Sail University: Winter Park, FL.
Ben Carass.

Once again, this episode was taped before the NXT title change in Tokyo, so there wasn't really any development of the **Balor/Owens** story besides a clip of them from ComicCon and **Regal** booking them in the main event for Takeover in Brooklyn. This show was a complete waste of time, until the Women's title main event, where once again **Sasha Banks & Charlotte** tore it up and showed why they are worthy of a spot on the main roster, but also it was clear watching the match they are going to be sorely misused on RAW.

Jason Jordan & Chad Gable vs. Steve Cutler & Elias Sampson. – **Jordan & Gable** over in 2:42. Gable did a bunch of amateur rolling to try impress Jordan, who for some reason was surprised that an Olympic calibre wrestler was doing so well against a couple of geeks. They got the win with a cool looking double team back suplex. – It's way too early to tell, but **Gable & Jordan** looked pretty decent together, as they should since they have been teaming for months on the house shows.

They showed the 9 Diva brawl on RAW with **Becky Lynch, Charlotte & Sasha Banks** and on reflection, it was still executed terribly.

Samoa Joe vs. Axel Tischer. – **Joe** over in 3:02. Unless I'm forgetting someone, **Tischer** is the first regular WXW guy to be brought into NXT and he kind of looks like **Josh Barnett**. **Joe** killed him to death with his signature spots, but took way too long doing so. Joe won with the Muscle Buster and the Rear Naked Choke. – These Joe squashes are not really doing much for anyone and I bet viewers that aren't familiar with him are wondering what all the fuss is about.

A **Baron Corbin** vignette aired. It showed Corbin getting tatted up and he talked about his NFL career then buried all the guys that came in from the indies, who worked for "chips and hot dogs" while he was getting fat pay checks in the NFL. – So **Corbin's** new gimmick is that he hates the smart fans and internet darlings. Meh. At least he had a direction now I guess.

Eva Marie came out on the stage and was absolutely hated. She announced that she would be making her NXT debut next week. – Short and painless. I’m curious to see how much Eva has improved in the ring, because she was one of the worst performers in the company before they sent her to **Brian Kendrick**.

Non-Title Match: Blake & Murphy (NXT Tag Team Champions) w/ Alexa Bliss vs. Sawyer Fulton & Angelo Dawkins. – **Blake & Murphy** over in 3:05. This was the most nothing match you will ever see. Fulton stood on the apron the entire time while Blake & Murphy beat up Dawkins. It was dull and uneventful; Blake & Murphy won with their suplex/frog splash combo



thingy. Afterwards, something interesting actually happened! **Blake & Murphy** picked up **Bliss**, kind of like a cheerleader, and threw her into the air and she came down with her Sparkle Splash on Fulton.

Sami Zayn came out with his arm in a sling to update everyone on his injury status. He talked about 2014 being the best year of his career and said 2015 was turning out to be the worst. Sami announced that he would likely be out until the end of the year but said revenge is the best motivation and cut a promo on **Kevin Owens**. Sami declared that the last 12 years had been about **Zayn** and Owens being tied together and vowed that the next 12 years would be the same. He looked right in the camera and told Owens he was coming for him to finish and the crowd were on their feet for their fallen hero. – Really good stuff from Sami. It sucks he will be out for so long, but at least

when he does come back the story of him going after Owens should be fantastic.

Footage from ComicCon aired with **William Regal** announcing **Balor vs. Owens II** as the main event for Takeover in Brooklyn.

NXT Women’s Championship: Sasha Banks (C) vs. Charlotte. – **Sasha** retained at 13:45.

Everything about the presentation here felt like a big time main event. They got the most out of a simple collar and elbow than anyone in WWE in years. **Charlotte** did the Flair flip in the corner but **Sasha** cut her off with her double knee bridge spot and got the heat. **Charlotte** did the Flair flop and **Sasha** mocked her with a strut then worked a straitjacket chinlock and used **Charlotte’s** Figure Four headlock against her. **Charlotte** landed a big powerbomb for a double-down then she made her comeback and they started the near-falls. **Charlotte** fired up after being slapped in the face and beat the crap out of **Sasha** in the corner then went for the Figure Four but **Sasha** countered into a rollup for a near-fall. After some reversals, **Charlotte** got the Figure Four, however some of her extensions came out, so instead of panicking, **Charlotte** threw a bunch of punches with the hair still in her hand. **Sasha** got to the ropes but **Charlotte** didn’t break the hold and rolled to the floor while still applying the pressure to **Banks**, who was tied up in the ropes. **Sasha** hit the Banks Statement; **Charlotte** fought it for as long as she could but eventually had to tap-out. Both women were in tears afterwards and hugged each other in the middle of the ring to close the show.

“The NXT women’s division is in great hands” said **Corey Graves**, however after these two and **Becky Lynch** were called-up to RAW, I wouldn’t be so sure about that anymore. – Another great

match from **Sasha & Charlotte**. The sad thing is this could be one of the last great women's matches NXT has for some time, unless the three girls that were called-up work the Brooklyn Takeover show. There is just no way these girls are going to be allowed to work a match like this on RAW, which is truly depressing. I would advise checking this match out; it wasn't a blow-away Takeover calibre match, but it was still a very good TV main event, which I can promise you the women on RAW will never have the chance to deliver.



WWE NXT TV Taping Results – July 16th 2015.

Full Sail University: Winter Park, FL.

Ben Carass.

Jushin “Thunder” Liger, at 50 years of age and 31 years into his legendary career, will, astonishingly, make his WWE debut on August 22nd at the Barclay's Centre in Brooklyn, NY at the NXT Takeover event. Liger will be facing Tyler Breeze in a match that seemingly came out of nowhere. I'm not sure if the WWE has worked out some kind of talent deal with New Japan, although I seriously doubt it, or if Liger is just being brought in as a special attraction so they can have some WWE footage of him if they decide to put him in the Hall of Fame at some point as a way to drum up some interest for their product in Japan, like they did with Fujinami. As much as I would love to see WWE use guys from New Japan on a regular basis, or at least bringing them into NXT where they have less chance of being McMahonized, I don't expect guys like **Tanaka** or **Komatsu** to be signed to developmental deals, nor do I see **Okada** or **Nakamura** coming in for a shot here and there. It is still a fascinating situation, since New Japan already has a working relationship with Ring of Honor and are sending Okada, Nakamura & KUSHIDA back over in August for the show at the 2300 Arena in Philadelphia. I certainly wouldn't put it past WWE to make a political move to try disrupt the ROH/New Japan deal, however what would the WWE get out of doing so? ROH is hardly in a position to compete nationally and it is a great place for guys to get experience before getting developmental deals. Maybe HHH is on a power trip and, since he pretty much wants NXT to be ROH, is trying to pull a power-play to show those indie guys who is boss. Although, like I said, ROH is a great resource for the WWE to pilfer at will and hurting them isn't really going to do anybody any good.

The rest of the tapings was the build for the Takeover Brooklyn show. The three official matches are **Finn Balor** defending the NXT title against **Kevin Owens**, **Tyler Breeze vs. Jushin Liger** and **Sasha Banks** putting the Women's title on the line against **Bayley**. From the TV, other matches look to be, **Samoa Joe vs. Baron Corbin** and **Blake & Murphy** defending the tag straps against one of a number of geek teams, or perhaps a multi-team match.

Taped for July 22nd

Finn Balor opened the show with a promo about becoming the new NXT champion and a contract signing is booked for the main event segment for the **Balor/Owens** rematch at Takeover in Brooklyn. **Eva Marie** over **Cassie** with the Sliced Bread. **Baron Corbin** squashed **Mr 450**. **Samoa Joe** downed **Mike Rolles**. **Bayley** beat **Emma** then challenged **Charlotte**. **Vaudevillains** beat **Angelo Dawkins & Sawyer Fulton**. The contract segment ended in the usual schmoz. **Owens** turned over the table and **William Regal** took a bump. **Balor** got the better of the brawl and **Owens** backed off.

Taped for July 29th

Scott Dawson & Dash Wilder over **Enzo Amore & Big Cass**. **Baron Corbin** beat **Jessie Sorensen**. **Jason Jordan & Chad Gable** squashed **Elias Sampson & Manny Garcia**. **Charlotte** downed **Dana Brooke**. **Kevin Owens** beat **Martin Stone**. **Blake & Murphy** retained the NXT Tag titles over the **Vaudevillains** with help from **Alexa Bliss**.

Taped for August 5th

Bayley over **Charlotte** in what was reportedly a good match. **Baron Corbin** squashed **Steve Cutler**. **Tyler Breeze** over **Aaron Solo**; post-match **Regal** booked **Tyler Breeze vs. JUSHIN "THUNDER" LIGER** at Takeover Brooklyn. **The Hype Bros** downed **Dawson & Wilder**. **Samoa Joe** pinned **Rhyno** with the muscle buster.

Taped for August 12th

Tye Dillinger beat **Solomon Crowe**; **Dillinger** debuted his new "Perfect 10" gimmick he has been using on the house shows. **Baron Corbin** over **Axel Tischer**. Afterwards, **Steve Cutler** ran down but **Corbin** killed him quickly. **Samoa Joe** showed up and challenged **Corbin**; they got into a brawl and **Joe** ended up choking out **Corbin**. Presumably to set up a match at Takeover Brooklyn. **Finn Balor** downed **Marcus Louis** in a non-title then **Kevin Owens** attacked him afterwards. **Bayley** over **Becky Lynch** to become the #1 contender for the women's strap at Takeover.

Mid-South Wrestling (TV #131)

March 11th 1982

Irish McNeil Boys Club: Shreveport, LA.

Ben Carass.

The Grappler, Killer Karl Kox, Iron Mike Sharpe, Mr Olympia, Bob Roop. – Boy do they not make wrestlers like they used to. Just hearing those names alone is enough to send you back in time to the dark, dingy, smoke filled arenas of the 60's, 70's and 80's. Well, we've got all of them on this episode of Mid-South. As noted before, we've skipped ahead two weeks due to the unfortunate gaps in the MS library so just to get you up to speed, here are the main storylines at the moment.

Skandor Akbar stole the **Samoans** away from **Ernie Ladd** and also brought in the **One Man**



Gang. **Akbar's** crew has been putting people out left and right: they “broke” **Ladd's** leg, “fractured” **Dick Murdoch's** ribs and sent **Mike George** home with a back injury. **Ladd** has promised revenge and vowed to get old-school on **Akbar** by bringing in some people that **Ladd** could trust. **Paul Orndorff & Bob Roop** are still working together to try take the North American title away from **Ted Dibiase**, who was on colour commentary duty this week with **Boyd Pierce**. **Boyd** ran down the show as always and **Dibiase**, in his stylish brown leather jacket, talked about **Akbar's** reign of terror and his North American title defence

next week against either **Bob Roop** or **Paul Orndorff**.

Buddy Landel & Jesse Barr vs. Bill Ash & Jesse Tanner. – **Landel & Barr** over in 3:45. We've only seen **Landel** a couple of times during the early stages of our look at the run of Mid-South TV and he was mainly an enhancement guy for the bigger stars up to this point. **Boyd** mentioned that **Jesse Barr's** father, **Sandy**, was a star in the Portland territory in the 60's. **Barr** didn't do much apart for sell, so **Landel** could run wild and make the comeback. **Landel** pinned **Tanner** with a nice Belly-to-Belly suplex. – Match wasn't much. I suspect **Landel** getting the win over some even bigger jobbers than him was so he could have a little credibility the next time he puts over a top talent.

Boyd Pierce threw to a replay of the “Living Stardust” **Dusty Rhodes vs. Ed Wiskowski** (see #MS-128 review last week); **Rhodes** won with an elbow drop.



The Grappler vs. Frank Monte. –**The Grappler** over in 3:52. **Boyd** talked about the **Grappler** beating **Dibiase** for the North American title in 1980. Imagine WWE referencing something from two years ago in their storylines. It's completely unthinkable. The gimmick was the **Grappler** had to wear an “orthopaedic boot”, which the announcers questioned the validity of and **Dibiase** said the boot was in fact loaded! **Grappler** beat up **Monte** like a geek, tied him in the tree-of-woe and

stomped him with the dreaded loaded boot. **Grappler** got the pin after an inverted shoulder breaker and a totally wacky running **Fujiwara** armbar. – **Grappler** looked strong and the loaded boot gimmick is tremendous. In fact, a “loaded” anything is automatically awesome. It is a gimmick that has seemingly been lost to history, but I would love to see it make a return. It’s so simple and easy to get over, plus it never fails to get heat.

Killer Karl Kox vs. Don Serrano. – SQU-IZ-ASH for **Kox** in 0:55. The little I have seen of **Kox**, mostly from 70’s All Japan, he was virtually always a monster heel, which he was for the majority of his career, aside from a few stints here and there as a babyface, perhaps most notably for **Jim Barnett** in 1973 in Australia when **Kox** joined the **People’s Army** to fight **Big Bad John’s Mercenary Soldiers** in an early big NWO-type angle. **Kox** also worked in the Mid-South area in the 70’s, drawing 17,000 on July 17th 1976 fans to the Super Dome to see a “Jim Bowie Death Match” (essentially a Blindfold match) against his protégé, **Dick Murdoch**. So, it was a little odd to see him as a babyface, although at this point in his 50’s, I guess it was that nostalgia type of deal. **Kox** came out to “Here Come the Judge” by Shorty Long, which was also wacky. **Kox** must have forgotten he was a face, because he jumped **Serrano** at the bell like a total heel; perhaps it was a nod to his past as a top bad guy. **Kox** won with his brainbuster, which looked pretty decent. – Total **JYD** booking for **Kox**, who looked old and out of shape, but the people loved him so I suppose it doesn’t matter.

Iron Mike Sharpe vs. Bob Orton Jr. – **Sharpe** over in 5:36. **Sharpe** held the Louisiana and Mississippi titles in 1979, but this is our first look at him here in the 80’s, and at 6’4, 280lbs, he looked huge next to **Orton**, who was not a small man himself. There was some rare miscommunication early and the match started out a little rough. **Sharpe** showed off his power with some big slams and **Orton** played the cowardly heel. **Orton** raked the eyes to get a little heat, but **Sharpe** soon came back and **Orton** took the Shawn Michaels bump in the corner to get **Sharpe** over as a power guy. **Sharpe** worked over **Orton’s** back and got the submission with a **Bruno**-style backbreaker.

Resser Bowden interviewed **Paul Orndorff & Bob Roop** in the ring. The heels complained about not being told by Mid-South which one of them would be facing **Ted Dibiase** next week for the North American title, and whoever wasn’t chosen would be banned from ringside. **Roop** buried **Bill Watts** for suggesting that the two face each other to determine who got the shot at **Dibiase** and **Resser** said we would have to wait until next week to find out which one of them is chosen by **Grizzly Smith**. Back at the desk, **Dibiase** said he would wrestle either man and was looking forward to the challenge.

Paul Orndorff vs. Tony Torres. – **Orndorff** over in 3:13. **Orndorff** had grown an awesome manly beard. Match was a basic enhancement affair. **Orndorff** dominated and worked over the arm; he landed an enzuigiri out of nowhere which was unexpected then got the win with **Ted Dibiase’s** powerslam. – **Orndorff** looked strong and using one of **Dibiase’s** moves was a nice little touch.

Non-Title Match: Mr Olympia (Mississippi Heavyweight Champion) vs. Bob Roop. – TV Time Limit Draw at 8:28. They went back-and-forth with counters early; **Olympia** moved so damn fast for the time and **Roop** tried to slow him down with some grappling. **Paul Orndorff** came out to ringside, but **Killer Karl Kox** showed up and ran him off. **Olympia** took over and **Roop** tried to bail, however every time he attempted to leave the ring, **Kox** was there to stop him, and even the big, tough amateur wrestler, **Roop** was afraid of the crazy old man, **Kox**. They did a couple of near-falls as **Boyd Pierce** noted that the time limit was running out and **Boyd** hyped **Dibiase** defending his title next week against either **Roop** or **Orndorff**. – Good action from **Olympia & Roop**. The

story with **Orndorff** winning his match and **Roop** failing to do the same gave us a hint that **Orndorff** would be getting the match with **Dibiase** next week, however they never outright told the viewers, so they would have to tune in next week to find out.



A solid show overall, with a bunch of old-school names and the usual logical episodic storytelling building to next week. Speaking of next week, episode #132 is quite the historic show, not just for Mid-South Wrestling, but for pro-wrestling overall. There is some more fabulous booking during the **Orndorff/Roop/Dibiase** title match deal, however even bigger than the North American Heavyweight Championship is the debut of the one and only, greatest commentator of all time, **Jim Ross**. Be

sure to check it out!

Next Week's Issue

Next week we take a look at the first few nights of the 2015 G1 Climax, and what could be some match of the year candidates. Plus, we look at WWE Battleground, the fallout, and much more!

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