



Cubed Circle Newsletter 202 – Punk in the news, and perhaps in the Hall of Fame too

We have a big issue for you this week, as we not only look at the role of historical influence in the Wrestling Observer Hall of Fame by investigating arguments for both the Sharpe Brothers and CM Punk (with some Volk Han discussion along the way), but Ben Carass also returns with coverage of all the week's news in the Pro-Wres Digest, as well as reviews of RAW, NXT, and Mid-South from 1982 featuring the debut of Jim Duggan opposite Dick Murdoch!

– Ryan Clingman, *Cubed Circle Newsletter Editor*

Wrestling Observer Hall of Fame 2015 – The Role of Historical Influence

Ryan Clingman

Emphasised on Wrestling Observer Hall of Fame ballots are the notions of value to the industry, trend-setting, and positive historical significance. All of these criteria may lie within the broad domain of "influence", however, much like the majority of the non-drawing related Hall of Fame criteria, a great deal is left to the voter's interpretation. How did historical context affect the success of a performer's run? Did the legacy the candidate leave result in further creative, artistic, and monetary victories in the business? Did the candidate define a role, and if so, would the niche have come about at all or been drastically different without them? These are all natural questions that arise from the fairly straightforward set of guidelines brought forth by the balloting guidelines, and are questions that we will be addressing below for specific candidates, the Sharpe Brothers and CM Punk.

Of all the Japanese candidates, and perhaps most of the candidates across all regions, very few, if any, were more instrumental in defining a specific niche in the industry than Mike & Ben Sharpe. There were interviewers before Mean Gene, announcers preceding Howard Finkel, and shoot wrestlers before Volk Han, but there simply weren't gaijin wrestlers prior to the appearance of Mike and Ben Sharpe in Japan. On a superficial level, this should all but guarantee their induction, as gaijin formed the basis for Japanese professional wrestling for the better part of three decades following the first appearance of the Sharpes in the country on February 19th 1954. However, when considering the social climate of Japan following World War II, and the context in which the Sharpes appeared, we are all but forced to ask further questions.



Kimura, Rikidozan & The Sharpes

Could the gaijin role have been filled by any other team during the early days of the JWP? This is perhaps the first question that should be asked, as the Sharpe Brothers may have very well simply filled the basic criteria for Rikidozan at the time, that is, tall Americans (the Sharpes were actually Canadian, but then again, Rikidozan was Korean) who could serve as decent working competition, given the still developing style of the time, against Rikidozan and Masahiko Kimura, amongst others. Japan was highly nationalistic during the post-war period, and clung to the story of one of their own battling the American invaders. This was a story reflected in many forms of Japanese media at the time. But, if questions of this sort are to be asked, then what of almost any major wrestling draw in history? I cannot think of a major star in the history of the business not succeeding, at least to some extent, due to the social climate of the time. Bruno Sammartino, even with his physical features and natural charisma benefited from the support of minority groups in New York. Rikidozan was born from the

aforementioned want from the culture for a Japanese hero, the same culture that spawned the likes of comic book icon, Astroboy. Inoki and Baba followed from what was built from Rikidozan, and Rock and Austin were born from a collection of circumstance and the entertainment edge of the 1990s.

To say that the candidacy of any of these performers should be questioned, simply due to their births from circumstance, is not only laughable, but also shows that almost any major star in pro-wrestling must, at least to some extent, resonate with the culture of the time. Whilst the Sharpes are clearly not the icons that Inoki, Baba, Rikidozan, Hogan, Rock, or Austin were, they are still two of the most important names in the history of Japanese professional wrestling. It is doubtful that puroresu would have become nearly as big or successful than it did without the Sharpes, who were the necessary opposition for Rikidozan, Kimura, and the nation of Japan in a post-war climate.

This argument is only further strengthened by the influence the Sharpes had on the working style in Japan, as they brought the initial American influence to early puroresu, as did Rikidozan to some extent following his excursions to the United States. And, of course, if the Sharpes hadn't played the role they did, at the time that they did, it is doubtful that gaijin acts such as the Destroyer, Lou Thesz, Freddie Blassie, or even later stars such as Stan Hansen would have been as effective, had they appeared at all. The Sharpes in matches opposite Rikidozan and Kimura, aided additionally in the formation of a TV culture in Japan, as large crowds gathered around public televisions, or the initial wave of household TVs to watch the matches.

In my eyes it is quite apparent that of any of the current Hall of Fame candidates, specifically in the Modern US and Japan categories, which I follow, there is no set of candidates more instrumental in their niche than Mike and Ben Sharpe – after all, they founded their role, a rare feat.

For others in the Japanese category, lack of long term influence may act as a detraction. An example of this is Volk Han, who despite debuting a great worker, and perhaps being the greatest worker in the history of shoot-style wrestling, the widespread death of the style, leads to a position that is not uncommon, that the shoot-style of Volk Han and Tamura is but a relic of the late 80s and 90s – although, Tamura was admittedly more varied than Volk Han, working more matches. This is most certainly an interesting argument for why Volk Han should not be inducted into the Hall of Fame, in addition to the relatively small number of career matches that he worked, as well at the height of his powers only being the second biggest draw in a medium sized promotion.

As much as Volk Han and Tamura are interesting cases, a candidate far more relevant to a discussion of influence, and the role that it plays in the Wrestling Observer Hall of Fame voting criteria, comes from the Modern North American category. This candidate is CM Punk, who, unlike Volk Han, whilst still being an outstanding overall performer – generating memorable programmes with the likes of Rey Mysterio, Jeff Hardy, The Rock, John Cena, and Raven, and perhaps being the best promo of his generation – an argument for the inclusion of CM Punk in the Hall of Fame that is often times overlooked is his unique role of creating the foundations for independent talent in the WWE.



When CM Punk debuted in 2006 for WWE's rebooted ECW brand there existed a very clear ceiling for independent talent who were lucky enough to be offered a contract. In 2006, the roster was far different than it is today, with very few independent talents, and with the few that were positioned far from the main event scene. But, Punk's career is a story of opportunity, either capitalising on circumstance, or fighting to alter his environment in order to meet his seemingly immovable goals. Punk won his first WWE Championship/World Heavyweight Title in 2008, but was positioned at nearly every opportunity to fail. He had the star qualities, but failed to escape a seemingly perpetual cycle of momentum growth and destruction. Then in 2011 he delivered his famous Las Vegas promo in July that not only served as one of the more iconic pieces of mic work of his career, but also catapulted him into a babyface position second from the top for the

rest of his WWE tenure.

What followed was numerous cooling and warming periods, with the company's then infatuation with Alberto Del Rio attempting to break into the Mexican market, infringing on Punk's ability to garner a long-term championship reign – this is, of course ignoring his rushed return following his superstar-making performance with John Cena at Money in the Bank 2011 in Chicago. Regardless, even when faced with seemingly doomed programmes with the likes of Triple H and Kevin Nash, Punk pulled through, which resulted in his highly touted year-plus-long championship reign, a run all but unfathomable but a couple of years prior.

Punk departed in memorable fashion, a story upon which Punk elaborated greatly in an interview with Colt Cabana in late 2014, but he surprisingly left a legacy of sorts with the company, as he opened the minds of some, as far as to what extent independent talent may be pushed. This is of course an outsider's perspective, however, since the rise of Punk, the likes of Daniel Bryan and Seth Rollins have taken off as stars, with the later specifically being pushed by the company, who didn't need their hand forced as was the case with Daniel Bryan. The timing, however, of the WWE's version of the Summer of Punk is unfortunate for this argument, as it coincides with Paul Levesque's rise to prominence as Executive Vice President of Talent, Live Events & Creative. This makes it fairly difficult to distinguish where Punk's influence ends and where Hunter's begins. And this is one of the stronger arguments that could be made against Punk as an influence on the future success of former-indie talent.

Creatively and artistically speaking, CM Punk had a Hall of Fame worthy career, but of course this statement is highly subjective. The argument of drawing power isn't as well defined as it once was, with the WWE brand drawing far more than any individual star for the most part. Drawing metrics will become even more difficult to analyse in future years with the distinct lack of pay-per-view buy-rates as the WWE Network continues to evolve. Even so, Punk's main drawing run would have taken place from 2011-2013, which, even if he had been a definitively strong draw, wouldn't have been a long enough period to secure him enough votes for induction. However, as more indie workers become WWE stars in the same vein as Seth Rollins, the argument for Punk will only grow stronger, given that he became, through tenacity and natural ability, a shining counter example to the negative stereotypes that WWE hold and held against independent talent.

The Pro-Wres Digest for September 13th – 19th

Ben Carass.

In typical Jeff Jarrett announcement fashion, Global Force Wrestling issued a statement on Monday that they have signed an international TV distribution deal with London based, Boulder Creek International. Now, this is NOT a television deal for GFW "Amped" to air on any specific channel, it just means that BCI will be shopping around the shows that GFW taped in Las Vegas earlier in the year to potential buyers. On their own website, BCI lists a bunch of its affiliates: BBC, CNBC, CNN, FOX, Sky Sports, Discovery, BT Sports and ESPN are the big hitters that are namedropped, however the chance of any of those establishments putting Global Force Wrestling on any of their outlets is riotously absurd.

Last week we noted the situation with TNA being cancelled by Destination America's parent company, Discovery, had not changed. After months of speculation, we finally got an update on Wednesday when Sports Illustrated ran an interview with Dixie Carter on their website which revealed that TNA would be staying on Destination America at least until the end of 2015. In typical blissfully ignorant fashion, Dixie made herself look like a complete moron by making a comment that even the most loyal of TNA fanboys couldn't take seriously in a million years: "You can't go back and recreate things. I've had the biggest names work for us, and it's just shown me that there's no magic bullet. So we're learning from our mistakes from the past and how can we be different and move forward." Anyone who has followed iMPACT even casually will be able to tell you that all TNA has done for the last 13 years is copy the 1999-2001 WCW business model and continuously make the same mistakes over and over again, bordering on the point of parody. Regarding the TV situation, it appears like Discovery have cut TNA a similar break to Spike last year and Destination America will continue to air iMPACT until the end of the year in order to give TNA a chance to find a new station. I don't get why all these TV companies are being so nice to TNA, after all, I thought the show business industry was a cut-throat, walk over your own mother's grave type of

environment. Maybe Bob Carter has some influence in that department, or perhaps those callous, soulless suits in their ivory tower had their icy hearts melted by that demurely charming southern belle, Ms Carter. I seriously doubt either is actually the case. Dixie also said TNA's biggest challenge was "building a brand in the US", something they will have a tough time achieving due to the tainted name of the company, not only amongst the fans but within the business world as well. If you take one thing away from the interview, besides that Dixie is utterly clueless, it's her comment: "We're contracted to Destination America through the end of the year, and we are in discussions going on for 2016." Once again TNA have been thrown a lifeline and have three extra months to find a new TV partner, however there are no more iMPACT tapings scheduled so the shows will likely be a bunch of canned matches and pre-tapes from whomever they can get hold of; so the shows will be more or less exactly the same. On top of TNA's domestic problems, they were also dropped by German and Austrian TV channel, DMAX this week. And so the never-ending farcical saga of the cockroach of professional wrestling companies, TNA, scurries along for now.

For anyone wondering what is going on with the Dr. Chris Amann, CM Punk, Colt Cabana slander and libel lawsuit, Dave Meltzer had an update in this week's Observer. Basically, the case is still in discovery and each side is accusing the other of lying. Amann, who is suing Brooks and Colton for \$1 million, refutes ever prescribing antibiotics for a MRSA staph infection, broken ribs or a concussion; all of which Punk claimed on Cabana's podcast. Besides negligence and misconduct, Punk is claiming his patient confidentiality was broken due to WWE releasing results of his medical records the day after Amann filed the suit. As noted by Meltzer, there is precedent in law that team doctors in sports practice under different regulations than personal positions and general medical practitioners. If a doctor is employed by a sports team then that doctor is required under contract to disclose the athletes' medical information to management. It makes sense if you think about it; think about your favourite sports team. They will assuredly have a medical team administering weekly physicals to the athletes and passing along the results to the manager; it's basic sports science. Releasing Punk's medical records in a public document may be another matter entirely, however that could be negated by the fact that Brooks openly discussed the same parts of his medical history in a public forum, on a podcast. Cabana is claiming he was simply doing his job as a host and was debating, even refuting at times, Punk's version of events. In my view, they don't have a leg to stand on when it comes to Cabana and his involvement in all this is just a way to further unsettle Punk. That's basically the gist of the deal right now; Punk is sticking by what he said on the podcast and Amann is accusing him of telling a bunch of lies. The burden of proof is on Amann's side, meaning that his legal team has to prove that Brooks was indeed lying about all the negligible claims he made about Amann on the show.

TNA announced on Monday that Earl Hebner would be inducted in to the TNA Hall of Fame in Salem, VA on October 3rd at a house show the night before Bound for Glory. It's the TNA Hall of Fame, so who really cares? It was also announced that Senior Producer, Billy Corgan will induct Hebner, you know, because they go way back to Lollapalooza '92.

By the time you are reading this one of the most packed weekends of the year will be underway. As noted last week, WWE, ROH, NOAH, CMLL and Bellator are all running big events. In addition to Night of Champions on Sunday, WWE are promoting an NXT tour in Texas this weekend. On Friday NXT is running in Austin, while ROH are presenting their All Star Extravaganza PPV from San Antonio. The next night, Saturday 19th, NXT will be in San Antonio on the same night that ROH will be running its TV tapings in the same city. HHH can deny all he wants that WWE are not aggressively going after ROH, however it's clear to anyone with a brain that WWE are trying to prove a point, just like they did when they brought in Jushin Liger to run against the ROH/New

Japan show in New York. The NXT house show in Austin has Bayley vs. Dana Brooke and Samoa Joe vs. Tyler Breeze and the following night in San Antonio features Finn Balor vs. Tyler Breeze and The Vaudevillains vs. Blake & Murphy in the Dusty Rhodes Classic, which will be shown on TV in at least highlight form.

The ROH PPV looks really strong, as Jay Lethal will be defending the TV title against Bobby Fish and defending the World title against Kyle O'Reilly, AJ Styles vs. Roderick Strong vs. Adam Cole vs. Michael Elgin, ACH vs. Matt Sydal, plus The Addiction vs. The Young Bucks vs. The Kingdom, should all be excellent matches. On top of that there's a No DQ match between Cedric Alexander & Moose, the Briscoes facing a mystery team and the greatest stipulation match of all-time: Dalton Castle vs. Silas Young, if Silas wins he gets Dalton's boys and if Dalton wins, Silas must become one of the boys! Tremendous!



NOAH's Great Voyage in Osaka should also be a solid show, with the Killer Elite Squad defending the GHC Tag titles against War Machine; their matches in ROH have been good and there is no reason why they shouldn't deliver again. Taichi vs. Daisuke Harada won't be a classic match, but it is probably time for Harada to take the title from Taichi. The same could be said for the main event which sees Minoru Suzuki defending the GHC title, officially, for the 5th time against Takashi Sugiura (Suzuki defended the title against Mio Shirai at a Pro Wrestling Wave show on August 9th but NOAH do not recognize it as an official title defence). The Suzuki-Gun invasion angle was awesome when it started, but it soon lost some of its allure when the likes of Taichi and Desperado were thrust into the Junior division and put in longer matches. At least we have got to see Minoru Suzuki working 30 minute main events again, which is always a treat. His second match with Marufuji was the strongest of the two and his last defence against Yoshihiro Takayama was a brutally thrilling encounter. I don't know how long Jado plans to run with the Suzuki-Gun invasion, but it certainly feels like time for the momentum to swing back in favour of the NOAH guys, so I wouldn't be shocked if Sugiura wins the title. Either way, I expect the match with Sugiura to be Suzuki's best since his return to NOAH in January.

The grand old lady of pro wrestling, CMLL, will be celebrating her 82nd anniversary on Friday 18th at Arena Mexico and, if last year was anything to go on, the main event should result in one of the biggest angles/news stories of the entire year. Unlike the 2014 main event, when Atlantis unmasked

Ultimo Guerrero in one of the most memorable moments I have ever seen, this year's main event of Atlantis vs. La Sombra will not be the culmination of a feud that ran for years. With only a month or so of build, including both men unmasking, La Sombra getting a couple of pins with a low-blow and a wacky deal where La Sombra unmasked himself in order to get Atlantis disqualified, the company is still expecting to break the \$1 million mark at the gate and even set a new record. Atlantis is 52 and surely close to retiring, while Sombra is 25 and one of the top rudos in the promotion along with Rush. Logically there is only one winner, Sombra. However the way the feud has been booked, everything looks like it is set up for Atlantis to get his revenge. Conversely, Dave Meltzer noted in the Observer that Atlantis is booked on the September 20th Arena Mexico show defending the Mexican National Light Heavyweight title against Mephisto. This is significant because an unmasked star going around the towns after just losing his mask is normally a big money draw. La Sombra isn't booked on any upcoming CMLL shows, so make of that what you will.



On Friday, PWInsider reported that the WWE/WWN relationship which has been rumoured for months is still a possibility. After wading through countless ads and pushing my malware blocker to the limit, I made it to an update in which Mike Johnson claimed that the two companies are still in talks with each other. Gabe Sapolski was at the NXT Takeover show in Brooklyn, so there could be something to this, however I don't really see it being a big deal either way. Can you see NXT guys going to work EVOLVE shows? Of course not, and the EVOLVE guys going the other way will most likely end up as either jobbers, or independent contractors brought in for a short term deal, like Gargano & Ciampa. Johnson also noted that the producers of Lucha Underground are trying to put finances together to get a second season up and running. El Ray Network has ponied up some of the cash and the producers are trying to make up the difference by looking for additional outlets like Netflix and international distribution. Essentially, they could start shooting a second season tomorrow, however the producers want to ensure the grandiose production values of the first season are maintained and the could not achieve that on the money they received from El Ray alone. Let's hope they can find some investors and/or land some international distribution, because Lucha Underground was hands down the TV show of the year if you exclude New Japan on AXS and we all need this show back in our lives.

RAW Ramblings – September 14th 2015.

Fed Ex Forum: Memphis, TN.

Ben Carass.

This week was not only the go-home show for Night of Champions, but it was also the “Season Premier” episode of RAW. They did a couple of interesting things to set up matches at the PPV and, in an effort to ward off the first NFL Monday Night Football of the season, they built the show around the RAW in-ring debut of **Sting**. Before the show, **Sting** was 0-1 in the WWE, however he actually ended up working two matches and now sports a record of 2-1, although his first victory inside a WWE ring came in a dire 1:45 matches with **Big Show** via disqualification.



HHH & Stephanie opened the show and played the babyface promoters, hyping the Season Premier and the PPV on Sunday; it was beyond infuriating. Here’s where they booked the **Sting/Big Show** match. My fury at the **Authority** hamming it up like total faces was quickly quelled when **New Day** came out and **HHH & Steph** danced with the wacky tag champs. Throughout the show they aired highlights from **Sting’s** career: teaming with **Dusty vs. the Road Warriors** at Starrcade 88, beating **Flair** for the NWA title at the Great American Bash 90 etc. **Seth Rollins** sucked up to **HHH & Steph** in a backstage skit and they booked **John Cena vs. Sheamus**; so the deal was that **Rollins’** two opponents were getting tough matches before Night of Champions. **Cena** beat **Sheamus** with the AA in a 14:45 exhibition of movez; it was fine, but completely disengaging. So with 25 minutes of TV time left, they had the **Sting/Big Show** match. It was clear something was up, because even the dumbest of dummies had to realise that **Show & Sting** were not going 20 minutes. **Rollins** interfered and he helped **Big Show** beat down **Sting**; even though **Sting & Show** went 1:45 and only did a couple of basic spots, it was still utterly wretched. **John Cena** made the save then **HHH** booked the **Teddy Long** special. So, **Cena & Sting** went over **Rollins & Show** when **Sting** hit **Rollins** with the Scorpion Death Drop then used the Scorpion Death Lock to make **Seth** tap-out. – The crowd were pretty flat for **Sting** initially, however they did get into the finish of the tag match. Still, I cannot see how anybody could possibly believe that **Sting** has a chance on Sunday, especially after making **Rollins** tap here. Oh yeah, they also teased and referenced the possibility of **Sheamus** cashing in the briefcase at Night of Champions. With any luck, **Sheamus**

will cash in and lose so we can just get that big albatross out of the way. He has been doing a lot of jobs recently, but come on, they can't really be putting the title on **Sheamus**, can they?

You can add **Nikki Bella** becoming the longest reigning Divas champion in history to the list of accolades that nobody gives a damn about. To be fair, they built up the **Charlotte/Nikki** match like a really big deal with promos and video packages, plus they even dusted off **Ric Flair**. They didn't let **Flair** talk in front of the live crowd of course, but he gave **Charlotte** a pep talk in the back and appeared during the celebrations for the **Dusty** finish when **Charlotte** pinned **Brie** after the **Bellas** did twin magic. Mother Hen **Stephanie** showed up to cut short **Charlotte's** celebration and in order to "uphold the integrity of the Divas title" (HA!), **Steph** declared that **Charlotte** was the winner via DQ and **Nikki** retained her title then she booked a rematch for Night of Champions. Match was fine, even decent, however the crowd didn't care at all; even **Charlotte** "winning" the title when she pinned **Brie** didn't get that big of a reaction, but I suppose the fans could probably see the decision being reversed a mile off. Let's hope **Nikki** uses being the record holder to get some real heel heat, because the **Bellas** flip-flopping back and forth every week is just as, if not more annoying than when the **Authority** does it.



Even though I don't like the program at all, I actually didn't hate how they set up **Kevin Owens** challenging **Ryback** for the IC title at the PPV; probably because there wasn't one mention of **Owens'** weight or appearance. Instead of telling the muscle-head vs. fatty story (not yet anyway), the deal is that **Owens** believes **Ryback** is a "weak little boy" because he is an insecure, jacked-up monster, who received a mega-push that he didn't deserve, while **Owens** toiled on the indies and worked his ass off for years to get to the WWE. Of course most of that was inferred, because what they actually did was kind of lame. **Owens** interrupted this horrendous promo **Ryback** was cutting; he even sang "All shuck up" at one point, which died a torturous death. **Owens** had that book, "The Secret" that **Ryback** was banging on about a few months ago and he buried him for believing that garbage. **Owens** called **Ryback** weak for being a gassed up monster who needed this self-help nonsense to make himself feel better. **Ryback** delivered some more scripted LINEZ in the most wooden manner possible and said at Night of Champions he would show **Owens** that he is the big guy.

The **Wyatt Family** were guests on **Miz TV**; I guess backwoods, hillbilly cults have agents too.

They blabbed on until **Roman Reigns & Dean Ambrose** interrupted. **Reigns** talked about the **Wyatts** taking out **Orton & Jimmy Uso** then said he and **Ambrose** had found a partner for Night of Champions. **Ambrose** beat up **Miz**, because why not and they had all had a face then the **Wyatts** vanished, because magic. – I guess **Orton** is taking some time off, because it would make no sense for him to be the partner and not appear on this show. I just hope they give us something better than an **Erick Rowan** return.



Other Stuff: **New Day** retained the Tag titles over the **Prime Time Players** in 12:10 when **Big E & Kofi** hit **Titus** with their double-team finish. The **Dudley Boyz** came out on the stage for a stare-down with **New Day** to set up the PPV. **Sasha Banks** submitted **Paige** with the Banks Statement in 5:20. Match was solid enough and by my count that makes **Sasha** 3-0 against **Paige** which is actually pleasantly surprising. **Team Bad** beat up **Paige & Becky Lynch** afterwards. There was a weird angle with **Stardust & the Ascension** and **Neville & the Lucha Dragons**. Everyone made their entrances like we were going to get a match, however the faces just cleaned house and the heels ran away. Maybe a segment ran long, if so, I'm guess it was the **Ryback/Owens** deal which directly preceded this, and they had their time cut. **Cesaro** pinned **Rusev** in 4:05 with the wackiest roll-up this side of El Paso. Match was nothing really; **Cesaro** did the old-school flying head scissors, which **Cole** described as "innovative" despite the fact that men were doing it in the 50's. **Dolph Ziggler** came out and gave **Summer Rae** a gift in a jewellery box which distracted **Rusev**. In the back, **Rusev** stormed into his dressing room and **Hot Summer** opened her present then went into the locker room to console **Rusev**.

WWE NXT – September 16th 2015

Full Sail University: Winter Park, FL.

Ben Carass.

On RAW **Nikki Bella** became the longest reigning WWE Divas Champion in history and nobody cared at all. This week on NXT, they set up the 30 minute Iron Woman match for the October 7th Takeover show with a simple face-to-face angle between **Bayley & Sasha Banks** that the fans went crazy for. The contrast of the reactions was absolutely startling, however completely

understandable. Everybody, apart from WWE apparently, can see that the Divas Revolution has been doomed from the very beginning because they are trying to manufacture overnight what it to NXT at least two years to develop naturally by treating the women as equally important to the men. The main event of the show saw **Bayley**, making her first appearance since she beat **Sasha Banks** in Brooklyn, beat **Sarah Dobson** in a fairly competitive match. Beforehand, **Bayley** celebrated with all the fans and brought Izzy, her superfan, into the ring to join in with the fun. **Sasha Banks** came out after the match and put over how great their Brooklyn match was, but said she wasn't happy because she lost. It was so simple and the dialogue wasn't overly scripted like on RAW: **Sasha** was upset she lost the title, **Bayley** said she could have a rematch, **Sasha** said she wanted to beat **Bayley** over and over again because she wants to prove she's the better wrestler, and **William Regal** showed up to book a 30 minute Iron Woman match in the main event of Takeover. Done. The fans went insane for the double announcement of the match and the fact that it would be the main event with "Holy Sh*t" and "Iron Woman" chants. This is how you present women as serious athletes and get them over as important, not with goofy faction warfare, Twin Magic, clueless scripting and booking, not to mention everything else WWE has screwed up with the women on RAW.



It was week three of the **Dusty Rhodes** Tag Team Classic and they did a really good job with it. First, they recapped the brackets in an Event Centre type segment with **Kyle Edwards**. It was really quite fun to get one of these segments that a lot of people, including myself, remember from watching as a kid. They showed highlights from recent tourney matches from house shows, and by the way some of these venues had about what seemed to be 50 people in them and had a similar look to the old IWA-Mid South barn. It's crazy to think that WWE is show putting on a show with CZW level aesthetics, while they film it with \$80,000 HD cameras. Our second round match saw **Rhyno & Baron Corbin** beat **Johnny Gargano & Tommaso Ciampa**. It was a really fun little match and **Team Indie** looked great; sure they looked small next to **Rhyno & Corbin**, but hey **Vince McMahon** will never see this. **Ciampa & Gargano** worked super hard and made **Rhyno** look like a monster and made **Corbin** appear somewhat competent. They should really bring more talented indie guys in to work with **Corbin**. His gimmick is that he hates them all anyway, he will certainly be bigger than all of them too, plus they can all bump and bump around to make him look good. I'd be on the phone to **Gabe Sapolski** to see if any EVOLVE guys are interested in that type of gig. Anyway, **Corbin & Rhyno** advanced to the next round.

Elsewhere on the show, **Apollo Crews** beat the fake-tan jobbing machine, **Solomon Crowe**. Once again they made Apollo sell for no reason whatsoever just so he could make a comeback with his impressive athletic spots. I don't get it; do they think **Crews** needs to learn how to sell or something? There was a weird deal with **Tyler Breeze**, **Adam Rose** & **Bull Dempsey**. **Breeze** was supposed to wrestle **Rose**, whose new gimmick is that he is a "Party Pooper" who wants to "poop" on everybody's good time, but **Dempsey** came out and they all bantered back and forth. Everybody delivered their lines well enough, I just couldn't help but think I was watching a segment full of geeks. **Bull** sent **Rose** packing with a flab attack and **Breeze** managed to escape unscathed to set up a singles match with **Dempsey**. **Asuka (KANA)** debuts next week, but we're still awaiting **Nia Jax**.

NXT TV Tapings – September 10th 2015
Full Sail University: Winter Park, FL.

The big news coming out of the latest round of NXT TV tapings is that Kana made her debut under the name "Asuka" and Bayley vs. Sasha Banks was announced in a 30 minute Iron Woman match as the main event of the next Takeover show on October 7.

Taped for September 16th

Tyler Breeze opened the show. Adam Rose and Bull Dempsey came out and they all got into a brawl. Poor Tyler Breeze. Tye Dillinger beat Martin Stone. Apollo Crews over Solomon Crowe. Baron Corbin & Rhyno downed Johnny Gargano & Tommaso Ciampa in the second round of the Dusty Classic. Bayley over Mary Dobson in a non-title match. Afterwards, Sasha Banks came out and the bickered back and forth. William Regal showed up and booked the two in a 30 minute iron woman match.

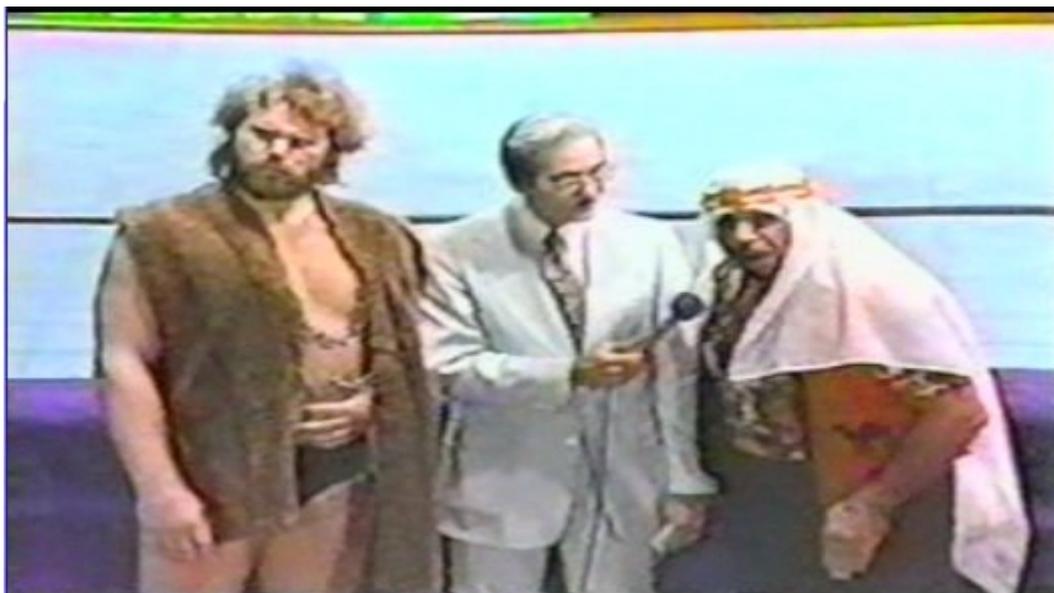
Taped for September 23rd

Chad Gable & Jason Jordan over Scott Dawson & Dash Wilder in the second round of the Dusty Classic. Eva Marie over Carmella via count-out. Tyler Breeze pinned Bull Dempsey with his feet on the ropes. William Regal introduced Kana under the name of "Asuka." Dana Brooke & Emma came out and told her to leave, which she did. This better play out better than it reads. Vaudevillains retained the NXT Tag titles over Blake & Murphy.

Taped for September 30th

Apollo Crews over Johnny Gargano. Dana Brooke & Emma beat Peyton Rocye & Billie Kay. Tyler Breeze Tommaso Ciampa with the Unprettier. Finn Balor & Samoa Joe beat Enzo Amore & Colin Cassidy in the second round of the Dusty Classic.

Mid-South Wrestling (TV #138)
April 29th 1982
Irish McNeil Boys Club: Shreveport, LA.
Ben Carass.



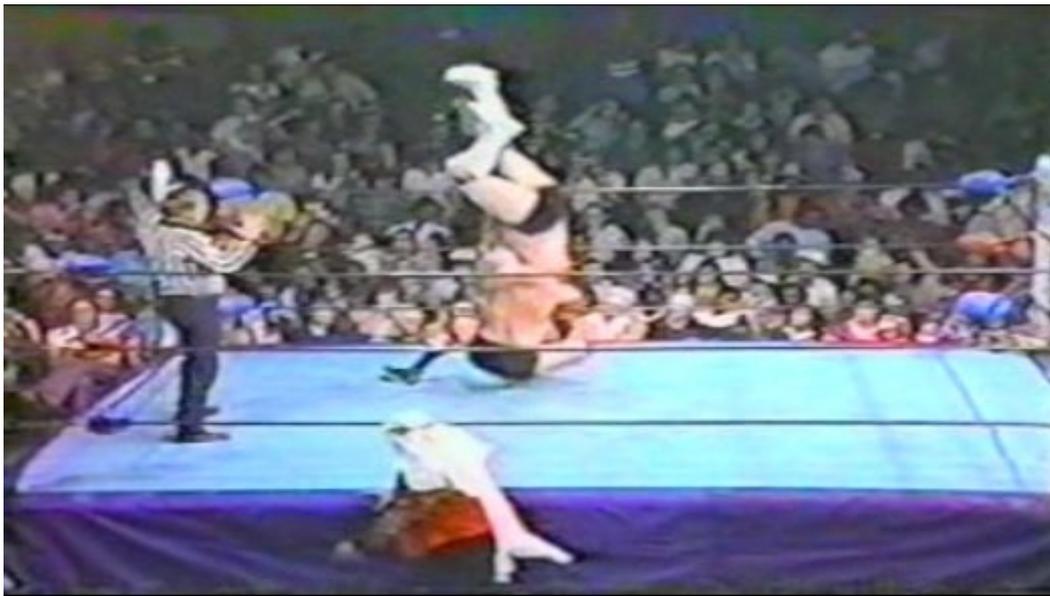
Boyd Pierce & Bill Watts welcomed us to the show; the original recording, which I'm guessing was on BETA, got all messed up so I was unable to here **Boyd** run down the show like he does every week. **Watts** hyped the debut of **Hacksaw Duggan** and began his three-plus year run of pronouncing it: "**Doogan.**" **Boyd** congratulated **Charlie Lay** on being recently elected the President of Mid-South Sports, so he's our new mysterious authority figure who never appears on camera, awesome. I believe the kayfabe chain of command goes something like this: **Grizzly Smith:** Matchmaker, **Bill Watts**, President of Mid-South Wrestling, **Charlie Lay:** President of Mid-South Sports. **Lay** was an old-timer who wrestled in the 40's and later worked in an office role for **Eddie Graham** in Florida in the 70's; I'm not exactly sure what his shoot role in Mid-South was, although it probably wasn't anything drastically important. **Watts** put over **Duggan** as a former member of the Atlanta Falcon's "Suicide Squad" and said **Skandor Akbar** had brought him in to get revenge on **Dick Murdoch** for nailing him with the shovel last week. They threw to a **Skandor Akbar** interview with **Reeser Bowden** at ringside and **Duggan** stood silently next to **Akbar** while he explained his diabolical plot. **Akabar** said that he brought **Duggan** in for \$1,000 because he didn't want to risk a member of his Army getting injured by the crazy Captain Redneck, **Dick Murdoch**. **Duggan** kind of looked like **the Barbarian, John Nord**, complete with animal skin vest and wacky cartoony facials.

The Assassin vs. Tony Torres. – Squash for the **Assassin** in 1:40. **Assassin** cut a promo before the match and said he turned on **Ernie Ladd** for the money and told all the fans they would have done the same thing. **Assassin** killed **Torres** like a total geek and got the win with a nice flying headbutt. – **Assassin** looked a lot better here compared to last week.

Ernie Ladd vs. Larry Higgins. – Squash for **Ladd** in 1:45. **Higgins**, for the third week in a row, was utterly hopeless; how this man made it into the business is beyond me. **Ladd** beat him up with ease then won with a big boot and a legdrop. – Aesthetically, this sucked. However, having two rivals squash a pair of geeks in back-to-back segments is simple old-school booking which never happens anymore.

Non-Title Match: Bob Roop (North American Heavyweight Champion) vs. Ted Dibiase. – **Dibiase** over in 6:59. This was **Dibiase's** return after 6 weeks due to "stretched ligaments" in his knee at the hands of **Roop**. **Watts** explained the whole "double, double cross" involving **Roop**,

Paul Orndorff, Skandor Akbar & One Man Gang which allowed **Roop** to defeat **Dibiase** for the North American title. **Dibiase** was aggressive early and went after the jerk that screwed him out of his title. **Roop** cut him off and worked over the same knee that he wrapped around the ring post in their match 6 weeks ago! (Awesome!) **Dibiase** countered the Figure-Four then made a fiery comeback and pinned **Roop** clean with a powerslam. **Watts** put over the win big and **Roop** tried to attack **Dibiase** afterwards, but **Teddy** saw it coming and hit **Roop** with his own move, the shoulder breaker. **Dibiase** covered **Roop** again and counted his own pinfall; **Watts** explained that **Dibiase** was after revenge and wanted to beat **Roop** physically and emotionally. – Really great stuff here. **Dibiase** was the returning babyface out for revenge on the guy who stole his title and he was booked perfectly in that role. **Roop** working over the same leg he injured 6 weeks ago was just beautiful; the announcers didn't even have to beat you over the head with it. You just understood what was going on because the story telling was so good.



“Special Challenge Match,” Dick Murdoch vs. Hacksaw Duggan w/Skandor Akbar. – **Murdoch** over in 4:50. **Murdoch** came out to the Marine Corps Hymn with his duffle bag, but thankfully he had on his tights this week. They brawled early and **Murdoch** intentionally tied himself up in his own army jacket so **Duggan** could land a bunch of free shots, before freeing himself and making a comeback; what a worker! **Duggan** looked kind of raw, but not necessarily green; he used some basic holds during the heat. **Murdoch** came back again and went after **Duggan’s** leg, which he didn’t sell at all. Finish was tremendously wacky: **Murdoch** hit the brainbuster, got his shovel out of the bag and chased **Akbar** around the ring. **Duggan** nailed him from behind and tried to use the shovel, but **Murdoch** countered with an Atomic Drop and the shovel went flying. **Akbar** jumped in the ring to try grab it; **Murdoch** kicked him away and nailed **Duggan** right in the face with a nicely worked shovel shot. Apparently this “Special Challenge” match was no DQ, because the referee didn’t call for the bell and counted the fall after the shovel shot. – This was a lot of wacky, wild fun. It would have been nice if someone explained that it was no DQ, but still that’s a minor point. **Duggan** didn’t really come off like an impressive monster heel like the rest of **Akbar’s Army**, although it took a shovel to the face to beat him so he was protected somewhat.

JYD (Louisiana Heavyweight Champion) & Mr Olympia (Mississippi Heavyweight Champion) vs. Bob Sweetan & Kelly Wayne. – **JYD & Olympia** over in 2:02. **Watts** mentioned that **JYD & Olympia** would be main eventing the next SuperDome show on May 1st. They

wrestled, and beat, the **Samoans** in a Lights-Out match in front of 21,000 people. This wasn't much of a match; the faces tossed the heels around briefly and **Watts** hyped **JYD** defending the Louisiana title against **Sweetan** next week. **Olympia** hooked **Wayne** with a sleeper, while **JYD** took care of **Sweetan**, and then got the win with an elbow drop. – **Wayne** did most of the bumping here, since **Sweetan** is getting a title shot next week, but still he didn't look all that impressive. Surely nobody could have believed that **Sweetan** had a chance to beat **JYD** for the title.



One Man Gang w/Skandor Akbar vs. Cocoa Samoa. – **Gang** over in 1:56. **Cocoa** did a little better than most geeks do against **Gang** and used his speed to avoid the big man for a while. It didn't last too long though, as **Gang** caught him with a bearhug. **Gang** hit a big bodyslam and won with his big splash. – I guess it is time for **Gang** to start beating guys at a higher level than the usual jobbers he faces, but it was sad to see the talented **Cocoa** squashed like a chump.

The Grappler vs. Buddy Landel. – **Grappler** over in 2:23. Match started with only 4 minutes of TV time left, so naturally I thought they were just going to do stuff until the time expired like every other “stand-by” match that goes on in this spot. Instead, they rushed through a match and **Grappler** won with a swinging neckbreaker.

Back with **Boyd & Watts** at the desk to wrap-up the show. They signed off by hyping **One Man Gang & The Assassin vs. Ernie Ladd & Mike Sharpe**, plus **JYD vs. Bob Sweetan** for next week.

This wasn't an explosive hour of Mid-South like we've seen over the last few weeks, nor did it feature “**Cowgirl**” **Wendy Richter** (BOO!), but as always it was a solid show with a lot of emphasis on setting up next week's show. The long term angle of **Skandor Akbar's Army** injuring all the babyfaces is starting to take some new turns, with **Duggan & the Assassin** being added to the mix. Not to mention the return of **Ted Dibiase**, who was put out by **Akbar's** goon, **One Man Gang**, which also weaves into the long running **Roop/Orndorff/Dibiase** feud over the North American title and the Figure-Four leg lock. I'm telling you, this long term booking thing is the future!

Next Week's Issue

In next week's issue we continue our coverage of the 2015 Wrestling Observer Hall of Fame, Night of Champions, NOAH, the news, RAW, and much more!



Have a happy New Day everybody!

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