



## **Cubed Circle Newsletter 211 – Hiatus Nearing Completion & All-Time Great Angle**

This week's newsletter unfortunately comes to you a few days late as a consequence of exam related delays, however, this is the penultimate hiatus edition of the newsletter, with some of the usual reviews and features from before the exam period returning over the next couple of weeks. More importantly, however, we have a fun edition of the newsletter for you today covering not only all of the news heading out of the last week or so, the Paige and Charlotte angle, and one of the bigger UK wrestling shows of the last several decades, but Ben also looks at the famous DiBiase heel turn of 1982 and all that led up to it!

– Ryan Clingman, *Cubed Circle Newsletter Editor*

### **The Pro-Wres Digest for November 15<sup>th</sup> – November 21<sup>st</sup> 2015.**

*Ben Carass.*

2015 has been a terrible year for deaths in the wrestling business and on 14/11 we lost another all-time great when former four-time AWA World Heavyweight Champion, Nick Bockwinkel passed away at the age of 80. Bockwinkel was reportedly suffering from Alzheimer's for several years, something his family denied to likely protect his reputation, which is understandable given how Bockwinkel carried himself and how he represented the business. Living in the UK and being born long after his peak, my only real exposure to Bockwinkel's work came later on in my pro wrestling fandom when I got into learning about the history of the business in my late teens. So I am in no position at all to give any kind of comprehensive retrospective of his life and if you want to learn more about Bockwinkel's legendary career, from training with his father, Warren, Lou Thesz & Wilbur Snyder, to his debut in 1954, the 17 year run on top as a heel in the AWA and even his role in Bryan Danielson winning the 2001 King of the Indies tournament, you should check out Dave Meltzer's great bio in this week's Observer.

Scottish independent group Insane Championship Wrestling drew the biggest crowd to a British wrestling show in 35 years on 15/11 to see Grado defeat Drew Galloway for the ICW World title at the Glasgow SECC arena. We had noted a couple of weeks ago that ICW were running the much bigger 12,500 seat concert hall at the SECC, however it turns out they drew 4,000 fans in one of the smaller halls at the SECC. Still, 4,000 people is an amazing crowd for a UK indie and ICW have announced that they intend to run the much larger, SSE Hydro Arena in Glasgow in 2016. The only way they have a chance of selling out the 13,000 seat Hydro is if David Cameron comes in to challenge Grado for the ICW title with the stipulation that Scotland will finally be given its independence from the evil English if Grado wins. The "Fear and Loathing VIII" show on 15/11 is available on ICW's streaming service at, <https://icwondemand.pivotshare.com>, and for the most part

was a pretty good show. The undercard actually wasn't anything special; there were a bunch of decent matches and one horrendous elimination six-man tag cage match, which Vince Russo could not have booked any more illogically on his best day. But the Galloway/Grado main event is worth checking out since it was legitimately the biggest British pro wrestling match since Big Daddy vs. Giant Haystacks at Wembley Arena in 1981. They worked it liked a big-time match, with the big WrestleMania kick-outs and late 90's style dog-and-pony finish, with commissioner for the night, Mick Foley getting involved and promoter, Mark Dallas, counting the three count just like Paul Heyman did at One Night Stand 2006. A subscription for ICW on demand is only \$5.99 a month or alternatively you can rent each show singularly for \$8.99, which is a pretty good deal to witness something that will go down forever as an historic moment in UK wrestling history.

In this week's RAW recap, regarding the Reid Flair deal, I wrote, ". I really don't care if Charlotte & Ric okayed the Reid stuff, it was just completely unnecessary." Well it turns out that Charlotte & Ric had absolutely no idea about Creative using Reid's death in the storyline; WWE didn't even give Ric a cursory phone call to let him know what they were planning to do. We could be talking about how the WWE finally turned a corner with the disastrous Diva's Revolution and how they put the women in the main event segment of RAW for this first time in years, but instead the major talking point of the week has been all about how utter shameless and truly disgusting WWE can be for exploiting the death of a 25 year-old kid just because they have screwed up this women's thing so much that they were desperate for an angle that would at least get people talking. Well, they are talking alright. Reid Fliehr died of a heroin overdose on March 29, 2013 in a hotel room in Charlotte, NC and anybody that followed the story knew just how devastated Ric was about the whole thing. You would have thought that Ric's close friend, Paul Levesque, would have known better and could have at least tried to put the kibosh on the angle, and for all I know he could have done. In the end everything comes down to Vince McMahon and if Vince has his mind set on something then not even HHH or Stephanie would be able to change his mind. Still, with 20-or-so writers, former wrestler's and agents all sitting around that table in the production meeting before RAW, surely a couple of them must have realised that this was a terrible idea. But they all just sat idly by while Vince McMahon proved that WWE can claim to be this wholesome, family friendly company all they want, but in the end it is still run by a carnie lifer who isn't above exploiting death to promote his attractions. Ric briefly addressed the situation on his podcast this week, however he was very careful not to bury anyone in the company because he didn't want to ruin Charlotte's career. He did make it clear that he had no idea about it in advance and that he cried while watching it on TV. Ric also said that nobody in the company had called him before, after, or even the next day. How classy. Elizabeth Fliehr, Charlotte's mother and Ric's ex-wife, publically bashed the WWE on Twitter, specifically Vince, Stephanie & HHH. She tweeted the three and asked if the writers were really that lazy and she also wasn't informed about any of this beforehand. It's not like WWE is new to exploiting deaths, in 2005 after the 7/7 bombings in London they shot that angle with Mohammad Hassan symbolically beheading the Undertaker, there was the revolting months-long storyline and the whole, "Eddie's in hell" stuff with Rey Mysterio & Randy Orton in 2006 after Eddie Guerrero died, and only two years ago they used Paul Bearer's death during the Undertaker/CM Punk build for WrestleMania 29. How these people don't realise that they only ever get negative press out of this stuff and that perhaps they shouldn't do things like this is beyond me. They just really must be the most tone-deaf people in the world or they have absolutely no shame whatsoever; I suspect it is a little of both. On 19/11, WWE issued the most pitiful and transparent statement about the deal and tried to take the heat off themselves by claiming Charlotte "strongly advocated" the idea, which sounds completely ludicrous to me. Here's WWE's official statement: "Subject matter this personal is only approved as a result of the strong advocacy of the talent themselves. Notwithstanding that, WWE is ultimately responsible for what airs in its programming."

La Sombra, one of CMLL's top young stars was officially announced as the newest recruit at the WWE Performance Centre on 19/11. Sombra (Manuel Alfonso Andrade Oropeza), 26, had been rumoured to be WWE bound for a couple of weeks and in last week's issue we noted that the CMLL TV show on Aztec aired a segment entitled, "La Sombra on the road to WWE" and I mentioned that the post-match deal with Rush at the Arena Mexico show on 13/11 was very reminiscent of a guy leaving a promotion. It seems like CMLL were aware of Sombra's plan to leave since at least September when they hurriedly threw together the mask match with Atlantis on two weeks' notice. Sombra, of course, lost his mask which at the time seemed like a very strange decision given that he looked to be one of CMLL's top stars for the next decade or so and the fact that Atlantis surely can't have too many main event mask defences left in him. CMLL then quickly rushed into a short program with fellow Los Ingobernables member, Rush, and Sombra put his buddy over clean last week at Arena Mexico on 13/11. Sombra himself announced on Twitter last week that he wasn't going anywhere just yet, however Dave Meltzer reported in the Observer that someone close to CMLL confirmed the rumours that Sombra was indeed going to WWE. During their tour of Mexico, WWE was scouting the luchadors and Sombra was the only one they offered a deal to, which Meltzer described as an "open invitation" for a developmental contract. A big indicator on Sombra's future came when he was not announced as part of the FantasticaMania shows with New Japan in January; Sombra had been a big part of the joint CMLL/New Japan shows for the past couple of years and his absence was certainly evidence that he had other plans. He was given the full new WWE NXT signee treatment, complete with the obligatory picture with HHH and the usual social media blitz from the company.

Destination America's new General Manager, Jane Latman, has officially put the final nail in the coffin of professional wrestling on the station. The final episode of ROH TV will air on Destination America on 25/11 and ROH issued a statement on 16/11 that they would begin airing on COMET, a Sinclair subsidiary, starting on 12/2. ROH will air at midnight on Wednesday nights, which is a worse timeslot than the 11pm spot they had when Destination America bumped them from prime-time, although COMET is available in 60% of the country compared to Destination America's 40%. TNA, whose relationship with Destination America has been frayed since almost day one, announced on 19/11 that they will be moving to PopTV starting Tuesday, January 5<sup>th</sup> 2016 at 9pm. In the Observer, Dave Meltzer noted that TNA's chance of a renewal were, "weak" because Destination America already had "buyer's remorse" when they signed the deal back in January. Marc Etkind, Latman's predecessor, was involved in the decision not to renew TNA's contract while he was still in charge and given that Latman axed ROH, there was virtually no hope of iMPACT being renewed. The cost of airing ROH to Destination America was basically non-existent, as they were essentially just airing a tape of a show that aired on the Sinclair stations four days earlier and they never bothered to promote the Ring of Honor product whatsoever. TNA on the other hand was supposed to become cornerstone programming of the station, with numerous spin-off shows and tons of advertising from the network. Destination America very quickly pulled back on all the extra shows, to the point where iMPACT was the only TNA programming airing on a weekly basis and they also put the brakes on a lot of the advertising when they realised that TNA could only get them 400,000 viewers at best. TNA were in talks with WGN America and PopTV about a new deal, both stations have a larger national clearance than Destination America, which was only available in 57.2 million homes, whereas WGN is in 72.7 and PopTV is in 72.5. WGN were negotiating with TNA after the Spike deal expired, but obviously nothing became of it. WGN aired WWE Superstars from April 2009–April 2011 but cancelled the show when the audience average dropped from 900,000 to 500,000. PopTV currently airs the Paragon Pro Wrestling TV show, however that is paid programming and is no extra cost to the network. Paragon announced on 19/11 that they would be leaving PopTV and finding new outlets to air their product, so TNA will be the only pro wrestling

content on the station. To me at least, it seems like both ROH & TNA will be better off away from Destination America, who pretty much screwed both companies from the get-go. ROH on COMET will at least get more advertising since it is a Sinclair affiliate and PopTV has a much bigger clearance than Destination America. The biggest thing for ROH is driving the live attendance, as that is how they make most of their money, so they are not taking that big of a hit from moving to a new network. TNA on the other hand makes pretty much all of its money from TV deals and if the usual TNA buffoonery screws up this new deal with PopTV, they will once again be in deep trouble.

Surprisingly, there is very little Rizin wackiness to report this week. There is still no definite opponent announced for Fedor, Sakuraba is still fighting a man 14 years his junior, Lei'D Tapa is still scheduled to be the sacrificial lamb for Gabi Garcia to rip apart like the T-Rex from Jurassic Park and Tsuyoshi Kosaka's opponent for 29/12 is still unknown. Spike TV will be airing the show on the 31/12 at 10am and their big selling point will be a "Breakfast with Fedor" theme. There is also no word on if the suggested Akebono/Bob Sapp rematch will actually take place, but Rizin and Kyokugen (the small group running Kid Yamamoto/Masato II on 31/12) are still interested in booking this freak-show fight. Shinya Aoki vs. Montanha Silva is the only thing currently announced for IGF at Sumo Hall on 31/12. In the absence of any real news, here's something completely wacky instead: Daisuke Hashimoto & Shogun Okamoto, will be competing in the 2015 Machida Ramen Festival on November 23<sup>rd</sup>. The two IGF wrestlers will be stuffing their faces in the ramen eating competition which is also open to the public and the IGF website is offering autographs and IGF merch to anyone that can eat more ramen noodles than Okamoto and Hashimoto.



Go Shiozaki, who quit All Japan last week, returned to NOAH on the 20/11 show at Korakuen Hall. He came to the ring to address the fans during intermission and said he wanted to have a match in the green ring. Suzuki-Gun interrupted and Minoru Suzuki offered him a spot in his army, but Shiozaki declined the offer. According to a report on puroresuspirit.net, Mitsuhiro Kitamiya challenged Shiozaki to a match during a backstage promo.

The AAA Mega Heavyweight title, which Alberto El Patron/Del Rio vacated last week, will not in fact be put up in a tournament, instead a singles match between Rey Mysterio & Johnny Mundo will

headline Guerra de Titanes, AAA's big year-end show on 4/12 at Feria de Tampico in Tampico, Mexico. As hilariously noted in the Observer, the local promoter of the show has claimed that Del Rio, Dr Wagner Jr. and even JOHN CENA would be appearing. – Apparently the weed in Tampico is out of this world.

Monday's RAW ratings were at a three week high, after the dismal 2.22 rating and 3.16 million viewers last week and the 3.24 million from 2/11. Break out the Dom, KD! The first hour did 3.54 million, hour two did 3.29 and the third hour stayed just above the 3 million mark with 3.05 million. The pattern of the decline over the three hours is virtually the same, however interestingly, a show built around a women's segment in the main event saw a 19% drop off in female viewers and only a 2% male drop off.

We've got the NXT taping results heading into the Takeover: London special on 16/12.

**November 25<sup>th</sup>:** **Michael Cole** was the authority figure for the night since **William Regal** was recovering from neck surgery. They did a contract signing with **Samoa Joe & Finn Balor** for their NXT title match in London. It of course ended in a brawl and **Joe** choked **Balor** out with the Coquina Clutch. **1) NXT Tag Champions Scott Dawson & Dash Wilder** retained over **The Vaudevillains**. Post-match, **Enzo Amore & Colin Cassady** hit the ring and got beat up **Dash & Dawson**. **Asuka vs. Dana Brooke** never happened because **Emma** ran out and the two attacked **Asuka**. **2) Apollo Crews** over **Jesse Sorensen**. **3) Bayley** defeated **Eva Marie** to retain the NXT Women's Championship. Match was apparently overbooked with several ref bumps. Afterwards, **Nia Jax** attacked **Bayley**.

**December 2<sup>nd</sup>:** **1) Baron Corbin** over **Tye Dillinger**. **2) Nia Jax** squashed **Blue Pants**. **3) James Storm** beat **Adam Rose** with the Last Call. **4) Chad Gable & Jason Jordan** downed **The Vaudevillains**. The **Vaudevillains** refused to shake hands afterwards. **5) Emma** over **Liv Morgan**. Afterwards, **Asuka** appeared on the tron and confirmed a match with **Emma** at Takeover London. **6) Samoa Joe** over **Tommaso Ciampa** in a reportedly hard-hitting affair.

**December 9<sup>th</sup>:** **1) Bull Dempsey** squashed **Riddick Moss**. **2) Enzo Amore & Colin Cassady** over **Corey Hollis & John Skyler**. **3) Asuka** KO'd **Deonna Purrazzo** with a head kick. **4) The Hype Bros** beat **Blake & Murphy**. **5) Bayley** downed **Peyton Royce**. Post-match, **Nia Jax** cut a promo and said she'll be the next NXT Women's Champ. **6) Samoa Joe & Baron Corbin** over **Finn Bálor & Apollo Crews**. **Joe** choked out **Balor** again.

There are five matches announced for Takeover: London so far: \*NXT champion Finn Balor vs. Samoa Joe. \*NXT Women's champion Bayley vs. Nia Jax. \*NXT Tag Team champions Dawson & Wilder vs. Enzo Amore & Colin Cassady. \*Apollo Crews vs. Baron Corbin. \*Emma vs. Asuka. WWE Survivor Series is on Sunday from the Philips Arena in Atlanta, GA. Cars is as follows: \*WWE World title Tournament Semi-Final: Roman Reigns vs. Alberto Del Rio. \*WWE World title Tournament Semi-Final: Kevin Owens vs. Dean Ambrose. \*Dolph Ziggler vs. Tyler Breeze. \*Divas title: Charlotte (C) vs. Paige. \*Kane & Undertaker vs. Two Members of the Wyatt Family. \*WWE title Tournament Final: ?? vs. ?. There will also likely be an unadvertised traditional 5-on-5 Survivor Series tag match with a bunch of mid-carders.

**RAW Ramblings – November 16<sup>th</sup> 2015.**  
**Bon Secours Wellness Arena: Greenville, SC.**  
*Ben Carass.*

For about two and a half hours, RAW was a really good go-home show for Survivor Series. The quarter finals of the WWE World title tournament immediately made things more significant and three out of the four matches were good-excellent. There were a few minor misses here and there, but for the most part WWE were heading for one of the better episodes of RAW for a very long time. And then the main event segment happened. Let's just get that out of the way, because it was so unbelievably tasteless that I don't really wish to spend too much time on it.



The main event segment of the show was a contract signing between **Paige & Charlotte** to set up their Diva's title match at Survivor Series. The women in the main event segment, you say? Well, in typical WWE fashion it wasn't about the two women fighting to be the best and who deserved to be champion; far from it in fact. Long story short, **Charlotte** brought up her dead little brother **Reid**, and began to bawl while spewing out her scripted lines. **Paige** then said **Reid** didn't have any fight in him and the two had a pathetic attempt at a pull-apart brawl. I really don't care if **Charlotte & Ric** okayed the **Reid** stuff, it was just completely unnecessary. Plus they have never mentioned **Reid** before so most of the viewers would have no clue what **Charlotte** was talking about and I bet a few of them just thought it was the usual WWE fake nonsense. The crowd completely died when **Charlotte** mentioned **Reid** (absolutely no pun intended) and they never really got them back afterwards. This was one of those deals that makes you embarrassed to be a wrestling fan. – And the winner of most disgusting promotional tactic goes to...

The World title tournament produced three very good matches: **Kevin Owens** beat **Neville** in 10:55 in the first match of the night. They pretty much had a toned down version of a PWG match and did a bunch of moves. **Neville** even hit a reverse rana which looked absolutely incredible. Finish saw **Owens** avoid the Red Arrow and win the Pop-up Powerbomb. The second quarterfinal was **Dean Ambrose vs. Dolph Ziggler** and they had a really solid babyface match, with lots of counter wrestling. The finishing sequence was very nice, as **Ambrose** countered the Zig-zag and they traded

roll-ups for a couple of near-falls then **Ambrose** hit his DDT to get the win at 16:45. **Ambrose** cut a promo afterwards about what he would do if he became WWE Champion and said he would make the shows have “more action and LESS TALKING!” – Good luck with that, **Dean**. It should be noted that **HHH** met with **Kevin Owens** after his victory in the back, although we couldn’t hear what **Trips** was saying. We could however, hear what **HHH** said to **Cesaro** before his match against **Roman Reigns**. **HHH** told **Cesaro** to go out and “GRAB THE BRASS RING.” – Poor **Cesaro**. Anyway, **Reigns vs. Cesaro** was the match of the night and **Cesaro**, of course, carried most of the weight throughout. **Cesaro** out-grappled **Reigns** early then **Reigns** came back and **Cesaro** made him look great. **Cesaro** did this awesome cartwheel off the top rope, because he is Superman. They traded a bunch of near-falls and countered each other’s finish then **Reigns** finally put **Cesaro** away with the spear at 20:10. **Reigns** got a decent reaction, however he cut a promo before the match and was his usual unnatural self and the longer he talked the more fans lost interest. **Cesaro** was an absolute hero in the match, it’s just a shame that **Vince** was probably sat at Gorilla thinking, “Goddamn, this **Reigns** is making **Cesaro** look great!” The last quarterfinal was **Del Rio vs. Kalisto** and surprisingly these two didn’t really have much chemistry and they botched a few spots. **Del Rio** even ripped **Kalisto**’s mask off and had to help put it back on at one point. **Del Rio** won with his double foot stomp in 10:01 and nobody cared at all. It is still mindboggling to me how badly they have screwed up **Del Rio**.



The only other thing of any note was the opening segment. **Undertaker & Kane** came out with their druids and talked for ten minutes about hell and evil, you know the usual stuff. **Bray Wyatt** showed up and he set off some cheesy thunder then telekinetically took over the druid’s, who all turned around to reveal they were wearing sheep masks. The druids “attacked” **Taker & Kane**, but the **Brothers of Destruction** completely destroyed these ten guys like total geeks and stood tall. – I kind of liked **Bray** stealing **Taker & Kane**’s powers at first, but there has been no explanation how this happened or what **Bray** did to **Taker** or **Kane** when he kidnapped them and now **Taker & Kane** are perfectly fine and not weakened in anyway by **Bray** “eating their souls.” Plus, **Taker & Kane** got their revenge last week when they destroyed the **Wyatt Family**, so there is still no reason for the tag match at Survivor Series. Typical backwards WWE booking.

**Potpourri:** The announcers gave an update on **Seth Rollins** and said he would be back in 6-9

months and they showed a tweet from **Rollins** with the meme, “Redesign, Rebuild, Reclaim.” **Tyler Breeze** squashed **R-Truth** in 4:10 with the Beauty Shot. **Summer Rae** put some lip balm on **Breeze** during the match which was a nice little touch. **New Day** cut their usual wacky promo and said people should be celebrating their one year anniversary and not **Undertaker’s** 25<sup>th</sup> year in the business. **New Day** then beat the **Usos & Ryback** via DQ in 5:50 when **Ryback** accidentally bumped into the ref and a DQ was called. It was such a terrible finish. **Ryback** continued to kick ass on **New Day** and the **Usos** double superkicked **Woods** to the floor. The **Dudley Boyz**, fresh off an appearance on Superstars last week, beat the **Ascension** in 3:15 with the 3D. **Renee** interviewed **Zeb Colter & Del Rio**; it was the usual MexAmerica garbage then **HHH** showed up and gave **Alberto** a pep-talk before his match with **Kalisto**. The announcers briefly mentioned the passing of **Nick Bockwinkel**; **Byron Saxton** said he used to watch AWA tapes when he was a kid and I scoffed at such a preposterous idea. They didn’t bother to show the awesome video package that is up on WWE.com, I guess because the **Dudleys** squashing the **Ascension** was more important. For those wondering, they did acknowledge **Ronda Rousey** getting KO’d as **JBL** brought it up on commentary. There is also an article on WWE.com about “**Rousey-level upsets**” that have happened in WWE, including **Kevin Federline** beating **John Cena**.



So for Survivor Series we’ve got **Roman Reigns vs. Alberto Del Rio** and **Dean Ambrose vs. Kevin Owens** in the two WWE title semi-final matches, **Undertaker & Kane vs. Two members of the Wyatt Family**, **Charlotte vs. Paige** and the **Final** of the WWE title tournament. I can’t say I’m too excited, but **Owens/Ambrose** should be very good.

### **Ted DiBiase/Junkyard Dog/Bob Roop, Prologue.**

*Ben Carass*

For nine long months the main storyline on Mid-South TV has been the feud between **Bob Roop & Ted DiBiase** over the North American Heavyweight title. **DiBiase** beat **Paul Orndorff** for the title on November 1<sup>st</sup> 1981 in Lake Charles, LA with the Figure-Four leglock. In response to the loss **Orndorff** enlisted the help of **Bob Roop**, who, being a great amateur shooter, came up with a counter to the Figure-Four and the two tried for weeks to take back the North American belt from **DiBiase** but never could defeat the fiery young babyface. On March 17<sup>th</sup> **Orndorff** was set to challenge **DiBiase** for the championship on TV, however he didn’t show up for the match and his



good buddy, **Bob Roop**, took his place. **Roop** defeated **DiBiase** for the title when **Skandor Akbar's One Man Gang** hit the ring and wrapped **DiBiase's** leg around the ring post; **Roop** applied **DiBiase's** own Figure-Four and ever the fighting babyface, **DiBiase** refused to surrender and "passed out" from the pain. The attack from **One Man Gang** put **DiBiase** out for "six weeks" (it was really only five) with "stretched ligaments" in his knee and it was revealed that **Bob Roop** tampered with **Paul Orndorff's** starter motor in his car so he would miss his match with **DiBiase**. This angle became known as the "double, double-cross" because **Roop & Orndorff** had originally gone to **Skandor Akbar** and paid him off to enlist the services of the **One Man Gang** in order to help **Orndorff** steal the title away from **DiBiase**. **Roop** not only vandalised **Orndorff's** car so he wouldn't show up, but he also changed the plan with **Akbar & Gang** so that he would become the new North American champion instead. **DiBiase** returned to TV on April 29<sup>th</sup> and pinned **Roop** in a non-title match. The next week saw **DiBiase** save "Iron" **Mike Sharpe** from having his leg injured by the **One Man Gang**, as he couldn't help but interfere in their match to stop **Sharpe** from suffering the same fate that he and many other babyfaces had suffered at the hands of **Akbar's Army**. **Roop** insisted that **DiBiase** be suspended and fined "at least \$5,000" by kayfabe Mid-South president, **Charlie Lay**; instead, **DiBiase** was fined \$2,500 and escaped a suspension, however his championship rematch, which he earned by pinning **Roop** clean on 29/4, was taken away as punishment.

In the weeks that followed, **DiBiase** mainly worked against, and demolished, TV jobbers, with the exception of a brief series with the **Grappler & the Assassin** – two of **Skandor Akbar's** hired goons. Each time out, **DiBiase** became a little more aggressive and he noticeably wasn't playing to the fans as much. On June 3<sup>rd</sup> **Bob Roop** defended the North American title against **DiBiase's** best friend, the **Junkyard Dog** on TV. In a call-back to the **Roop/DiBiase** title switch on 17/3, **One Man Gang** ran in and tried to wrap **JYD's** leg around the ring post just like he did to **DiBiase**.



**Ernie Ladd**, who had been feuding with **Akbar** for months, saved the **Dog** however **Roop** continued his attack and went to deliver a Bombs Away Knee Drop off the top rope, which under Mid-South law was the equivalent of the piledriver in Memphis: a move so dangerous it had to be outlawed. **DiBiase** hit the ring and threw his body on top of **JYD**, saving his best friend and taking the full impact of **Roop's** Knee Drop. The following week's TV saw **DiBiase** cut a passionate promo about how Mid-South had failed him because **Roop** stole the North American title from him and he never received his rightful rematch. **DiBiase** gave match maker, **Grizzly Smith**, an

ultimatum and said he would not wrestle again unless he got a No DQ championship against **Roop** and declared that he would leave Mid-South forever if he could not beat **Roop** for the title. The most notable thing about **DiBiase's** promo was that his right hand was heavily taped up and later on during the episode he would later squash TV jobber, **Mike Bond**, and for the first time **DiBiase** wore a white glove on his right hand. On that same show, **Junkyard Dog** did an interview and said he appreciated what **DiBiase** did for him but noted that **Teddy** was going about things the wrong way. The next week **Bill Watts** announced that the **Roop/DiBiase** No DQ title match was official and **Roop** stated that he would not wrestle **DiBiase** unless his glove was "X-rayed" and fully checked out beforehand. During a pre-tape promo **DiBiase** explained that his hand was injured and the glove was for protection then he vowed that he would never use the glove to cheat or to gain any

unfair advantage during a match. Later on during the 17/6 episode, **DiBiase** once again ran out to save **JYD** from another assault from **the Grappler, the Assassin & One Man Gang**, who once again tried to wrap **Dog's** leg around the post.

With the **Samoans & Paul Orndorff** gone from the territory, Mid-South was pretty slim on top heels that could draw money. **Ernie Ladd** was now a babyface, **Bob Roop** was a great hand but not charismatic enough to be the #1 heel, **The Assassin** was too old for a main event run, **The Grappler** had already been a semi-main eventer in 1981 when he was the North American champion, **One Man Gang** was far too green to be put in that spot and by this point guys like the **Freebirds** were only coming back for special one-off shots as they had already had their run on top



with the legendary “blinding” angle with **Michael Hayes & JYD** in 1980. **DiBiase** notes in his book that **Ernie Ladd, Watt's** right hand man in booking the territory, had told him to keep an eye out for a potential top heel that could come into Mid-South for programs against himself and **JYD**. One night after a TV taping in Shreveport, LA, **DiBiase** visited **Ladd** in his hotel room at the Sheraton and told **Ernie** that he had found the perfect guy to be the territory's top heel. When **Ladd** enquired about the identity of Mid-South's new top bad guy, **DiBiase** excitedly replied, “**Ernie**, you are looking at him.” **Ladd** apparently was immediately on

board with the idea and said, “Why didn't I think of that? That's it!” The two pitched the idea to **Bill Watts**, who also loved it, and so **Watts & Ladd** began to plant the seeds for a **DiBiase** heel turn, with **DiBiase** becoming more aggressive and wearing his famed black glove, which for a couple of weeks was actually white. More importantly, **DiBiase** badmouthed the promotion and issued Mid-South with the ultimatum which led to him receiving his title rematch with **Bob Roop**. The only problem was that **Roop** was also a heel and for **DiBiase's** turn to have the most impact it would have to occur with someone that the fans adored, someone who **DiBiase** had ran out to help on TV, someone who was legitimately the best man at **DiBiase's** wedding: **The Junkyard Dog**.

**JYD** held the secondary Louisiana Heavyweight title and Tag Team belts, but had always come up short when challenging for Mid-South's top prize, the North American Heavyweight championship. As the top babyface, **Watts** fed pretty much all of his heels to the **Dog**, who, due to his limited capabilities as a worker, usually smashed his opponents in short matches and beat them so decisively that they had to leave for another territory. Plus the beloved hero, **JYD**, chasing the elusive North American title was a much easier and guaranteed way to draw money without exposing **JYD** by putting the title on him for an extended period of time and having him work in long singles main events. There are of course exceptions to every rule, but the accepted wisdom back then was that there would be an instant drop off in business once the chase is over and the babyface has finally achieved his ultimate goal; in this case it would be **JYD** winning the North American title. In order to position **Ted DiBiase** as the top heel, they first needed to set up **JYD** to shoot the big angle on television. On June 21<sup>st</sup> in a non-televised match in downtown New Orleans, LA, **Junkyard Dog** finally defeated **Bob Roop** for the North American title. A mere two days later on June 23<sup>rd</sup> at the TV tapings in Shreveport, LA, this episode of Mid-South television was taped and **Watts, Ladd & Grizzly Smith** pulled the trigger and set **DiBiase** up as their top heel for the next four years or-so. This episode would first air on WGNO in its usual 4-5pm timeslot on June

26<sup>th</sup> before being biked around to the other surrounding markets. Two weeks later on July 7<sup>th</sup> **DiBiase & JYD** would wrestle at the Superdome and draw 22,800 fans, the biggest house since the **JYD/Hayes** match in 1980. Since **Watts & Co** didn't want to burn the program out straight away, **DiBiase & JYD** went on third from the top and the finish was a double DQ. The Semi-main event saw **Andre the Giant** beat **Killer Khan**, which they also set up on this episode, and in the main event, **JYD & Mr Olympia** went over **Big John Studd & the Super Destroyer** to send the fans home happy.

### Mid-South Wrestling (TV #146)

June 26<sup>th</sup> 1982

Irish McNeil Boys Club: Shreveport, LA.

**Boyd Pierce & Bill Watts** opened the show and **Watts** explained that **JYD** had become the new North American Heavyweight champion in New Orleans on June 21<sup>st</sup> when he defeated **Bob Roop**. **Watts** explained that **Ted DiBiase** was set to face **Roop** in a non-title match but **DiBiase** had injured himself when he ran out to help the **Junkyard Dog** in a brawl earlier on that show, so **Grizzly Smith** booked **JYD vs. Roop** for the title and the **Dog** walked away with the belt. **Watts** said that **JYD** would have to vacate the Louisiana Heavyweight title and a tournament would be held in Baton Rouge on July 6<sup>th</sup> to crown a new LA champion. **Watts** noted that **Ted DiBiase** would still receive his North American title shot and would also have to stick to the stipulation that he would leave if he couldn't beat **JYD**. We then got a series of pre-tape promos from **JYD, DiBiase & Roop** about the situation with the championship.

**JYD** said he was fortunate to win the North American title and was sad he had to vacate the Louisiana belt because he loved to represent the people. **Dog** vowed to defend the North American title to the best of his ability and would continue to represent all the fans of Mid-South Wrestling.



**DiBiase** cut a great promo and said he never thought he would have to face his best friend like this and questioned if he was really good enough to beat the **Dog**. **DiBiase** said his friendship with **JYD** didn't pay the bills and stated that when "business begins, friendship ends" then declared he would do "whatever it takes" to win the title. Back to another **JYD** pre-tape and **Dog** talked about being **DiBiase's** best man at his wedding then confidently stated that he didn't have to worry about **DiBiase** stabbing him in the back because **Ted** was "a fair man." Finally we got a promo from **Bob Roop**, who was furious about losing the belt and called the whole thing a giant "rip-off!" **Roop**

challenged **JYD** to a rematch next week and said he didn't have to worry about **DiBiase** beating the **Dog** for the title because **DiBiase** didn't have what it took.

"Dr Death" **Steve Williams vs. Jeff Sword**. – **Williams** over in 3:04. **Watts** spent most of the match talking about **Doc** training with **Dave & Mark Schultz** at the University of Oklahoma and mentioned that the **Schultz** brothers had helped his son, **Mike Watts**, in several amateur wrestling tournaments. **Williams**, who still looked super green, even his lock-up needed a lot of work at this point, won with an ugly backdrop, a chopblock and the Oklahoma Stampede.

**Non-Title Match: Big John Studd & The Super Destroyer (NWA National Tag Team Champions) vs. Ernie Kirkland & David Price**. – **Studd & Destroyer** over in 2:23. This incarnation of the **Super Destroyer** was **Scott Irwin**, who had been in Mid-South in 1981, where

he won the Tag Team titles with the **Grappler** and the Louisiana title from **Jimmy Garvin**. **Irwin** left for **Jarrett's** CWA in Memphis and formed a tag team with the **Masked Superstar** then the duo jumped to Georgia where they won the NWA National Tag Team titles from **Bob & Brad Armstrong** on January 22, 1982. In March of '82, the **Masked Superstar** handed over his half of the tag titles to **Big John Studd** and here they are in Mid-South. Match wasn't much, although **Studd & Destroyer** looked like killers as they murdered these jobbers. **Kirkland** was the proverbial sack of excrement and didn't go up for anything, so **Studd & Destroyer** beat the crap out of him. **Price** went up much easier for the heels and they threw him around too. Finish saw **Studd** submit **Price** with a Canadian Backbreaker.

**No DQ Match for the North American Heavyweight Championship: Junkyard Dog (C) vs. Ted DiBiase – If DiBiase Loses he Must Leave Mid-South Forever.**

– **DiBiase** became the new champion at 5:22. In true face vs. face fashion, the two shook hands before the match. **Bob Roop** sat in on commentary and said he wasn't going to interfere because he didn't want to be hit with a \$2,500 fine, plus he wanted to see **DiBiase** lose and leave forever. They got over **JYD's** power and **DiBiase's** quickness and superior technical skills early then proceeded to do at least five fish out of water stand-off spots. **JYD** gave **DiBiase** a snapmare but didn't follow up with a fist drop and instead shook **DiBiase's** hand again; **Roop** buried him for not being aggressive enough. **DiBiase** threw a forearm out of frustration and **Dog** fired back with one of his own then the two calmed down and shook hands once more. **JYD** got a near-fall with a Power Slam then **DiBiase** went for the Figure-Four, but **Dog** kicked him over the top, which was not a disqualification here in this in



DQ match. **JYD** went out to check on **DiBiase** and helped him back inside the ring. **DiBiase** reached into his tights, loaded up his white glove and nailed the **Dog**, who sold like death, and **DiBiase** pinned him to win the title. There wasn't as much heat as you would think for such an historic angle; the crowd just kind of gasped then sat there in a disgusted silence at what they had just witnessed. **Roop** was great on commentary and ranted about how he was right all along and knew that **DiBiase** would use the glove to cheat. "Nobody can knockout the **Junkyard Dog** with one punch" barked **Roop**, which in a pre-MMA 1982 I guess was a believable statement. **Roop**

continued to bury **DiBiase** for having no honour and for stabbing his best friend in the back. **DiBiase** didn't really celebrate and quickly escaped with his newly won championship. – I don't need to tell you how awesome this angle was, because it is one of the most famous in Mid-South history. I had seen clips of **DiBiase** heel turn before but had never seen the entire build, which was absolutely fantastic, and knowing the backstory made the whole thing even better. Any self-respecting wrestling historian should know about the **Ted DiBiase** black glove angle (even though it was initially white) and if you don't I suggest hunting this stuff down to see how a heel turn used to be done back when people actually cared about the characters in a pro-wrestling storyline. Five star stuff.

Back at the desk with **Boyd & Watts** and **Watts** said he couldn't tell if **DiBiase** loaded his glove but reiterated that **JYD** did not have a "glass jaw" and could take a "licking" then he confirmed that **DiBiase** was the new champ. **Watts** then threw to a video from New York with "**Vince McMahon Jr.**" interviewing **Andre the Giant** in an empty Madison Square Garden. They showed **Andre's**

scar from ankle surgery and **Vince** asked if **Andre** was ready for **Killer Khan**. **Andre** said he didn't need a cast anymore and couldn't wait to get his hands on **Khan**. They showed an angle from the previous week's TV where **Andre** came out, still with his cast on, and he said the doctors told him his cast should be cut off tomorrow. **Andre** told **Freddie Blassie** to get **Khan** ready then **Blassie** showed up and was his usual insane self, yelling unintelligible insults at **Andre**. **Andre** swatted **Blassie** away and he took a huge comedy bump into the ring apron. **Killer Khan** ran down and hit **Andre** with one of his crutches and **Blassie** hit **Andre** in his injured leg with his cane. Some referees and **Pat Patterson** ran out to help **Andre**, who fired up and refused to be helped by anyone. Back to **Vince & Andre** in an empty MSG and **Andre** said he would not let **Khan** get away with anything like that again then mocked **Khan** for "only" being "6'6", while he was "7'4" and said **Khan** had made the **Giant** angry. – This ruled! Not just because we got to see an angle from the promised land of the North East, but because back then pro-wrestling angles were, for the most part, executed with enough believability that suspension of disbelief was so much easier. As noted in a previous Mid-South report, **Andre** injured his own ankle when he got out of bed and they shot an angle on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1981 with **Khan** to pour a ton of heat on him as the guy who broke the **Giant's** leg. **Andre & Khan** then feuded from late July until December of '81 and took their Stretcher match around the big cities in the North East. When **Khan** showed up in Mid-South, **Watts** put him over as the only man to ever injure **Andre** and this video from WWF was to set up a match at the Superdome on July 7<sup>th</sup> 1982, the same show was the first **JYD/DiBiase** match which drew 22,800 people, between **Andre & Khan**.

**Killer Khan w/Skandor Akbar vs. Joe Stark.** – **Khan** over in 1:51. **Watts** noted that **Skandor Akbar** had "bought" **Khan's** "contract" from **Freddie Blassie** in New York and had brought him into be a part of his **Army**. I just love the idea of a pro-wrestling black market where heel managers can buy and sell wrestler's contracts. It's so carny; I just love it. **Khan** absolutely destroyed **Stark** and won with a vicious Knee Drop off the second rope. **Boyd Pierce** hyped **Khan vs. Ernie Ladd** next week! – **Khan** was a much better worker than I had given him credit for; he moved well, everything he did was smooth, while remaining believable and vicious at the same time. He's kind of become what the **Iron Sheik** was while he was part of **Akbar's Army**: a scary, badass, killer. It's too bad that like **Sheikie**, **Khan** won't be around for a long run.



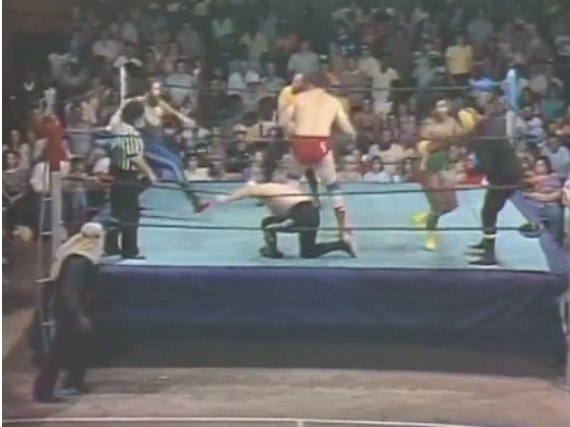
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**Sheik** was while he was part of **Akbar's Army**: a scary, badass, killer. It's too bad that like **Sheikie**, **Khan** won't be around for a long run.

**Buck Robley vs. Billy Starr.** – **Robley** over in 3:45. **Robley**, who looked like an obese **Randy Savage**, was returning to Mid-South after a six-month run in All Japan and **Watts** said that he had come back because "Superdome Fever" was sweeping the area and **Robley** wanted to be a part of it. **Resser Bowden** introduced **Robley** as, "**Buckley Christopher George Robley III**" then **Watts** talked about **Robley** being **JYD's** tag partner and acting as a "seeing eye dog" for **JYD** when he was blinded by **Michael Hayes** in 1980. **Robley** took pretty much the whole match and looked perfectly fine for a fat **Randy Savage** look-a-like. **Watts** mentioned that **Robley** was involved in an auto accident and had a steal rod put in his forearm, which had caused some controversy because wrestlers were claiming that he was using it to win matches. **Robley** did in fact use his bionic forearm at least 12 years before **Lex Luger** did so and nailed **Starr** with it before getting the win with a sleeper.

**Ernie Ladd, Tom Jones & Buck Robley vs. One Man Gang, The Assassin & The Grappler w/Skandor Akbar.** – TV Time Limit Draw at 1:02. Match was scheduled to be **Ladd & Jones vs.**

**Gang & the Grappler**, but the **Assassin** cut a promo beforehand and challenged **Ladd & Jones** to go find a partner so they could settle things once and for all. **Ladd & Jones** went backstage for a while then returned with **Buck Robley** and an intense six-man brawl broke out in the ring. As the babyfaces began to get the better of the brawl, **Watts** noted there was only a minute of TV time remaining. The faces ran all kinds of wild on the heels and the bell rang to indicate the end of the show. **Watts** said Mid-South would “investigate” what happened in the **JYD/DiBiase** title match and **Boyd Pierce** hyped **Ladd vs. Killer Khan**, **Grappler** challenging **Mr Olympia** for the Mississippi title and **JYD vs. Roop** for next week.



This isn't just the best episode of Mid-South TV we've looked at so far, it is one of the best hours of pro wrestling television I have ever seen. Everything was set up at the start of the show with the **JYD/DiBiase/Roop** promos and then the angle and title change were damn near perfection. Even away from the big **DiBiase** heel turn there was a bunch of great stuff on the show. From a historical standpoint, seeing a rookie **Dr Death** is certainly interesting, **Big John Studd & Super Destroyer** coming in from Georgia and killing fools was fun, the **Andre & Vince** video package from New York felt like a really big

deal, **Killer Khan** looked like a monster heading into the Superdome against **Andre**, **Buck Robley's** return was booked very well and the show ended with a riotous six-man crazy brawl. This show pretty much had it all and it is no wonder that they would draw 22,800 at the Superdome in two weeks' time.



### **Next Week's Issue**

In next week's issue, which is in reality but a few days away we will be covering Survivor Series, the aftermath, plummeting ratings, and much more!

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