

Wrestler of the Day – January 23: Nigel McGuinness

We'll head over to England today for a guy I wish got a longer mainstream exposure than he received: Nigel McGuinness.

We'll start in Nigel's first stop in America: the Heartland Wrestling Association out of Cincinnati, which used to be a WWF developmental territory. You might recognize Nigel's opponent, but the opponent's second is even more famous at the moment: HWA Champion Jon Moxley, currently known as Dean Ambrose. I'm not sure when the match took place, but it's either between May 9, 2006 – September 12, 2006, December 30, 2006 – January 2, 2007, or January 6, 2010 – July 14, 2010. My goodness I need to do better research on this stuff.

Nigel McGuinness vs. Sami Callihan

Callihan is rather rotund here and goes after a fan at ringside with a sign he doesn't like. He also has Pepper Parks in his corner who joins commentary with Moxley. I'm thinking this is in Moxley's first reign, putting this in 2006. Nigel is definitely a face here. Moxley starts doing an imitation of an old school commentator in a funny bit while giving Callihan a 99.9% chance of winning. He even describes Sami as Vader at 14 years old. They fight over a wristlock to start with Nigel taking over with an armbar.

Back up and Callihan grabs a headlock but Nigel flips forward over his back into a headlock of his own. Moxley's advice on how to get out of the hold: "PUNCH HIM IN THE FACE!" Nigel no sells a lot of Sami's fat man offense and knocks him to the floor in a big crash. Back in and they trade some slaps before Callihan hits a running boot to the face to take over. We hit the chinlock as Moxley espouses the merits of the Crew faction.

Callihan sits on Nigel's chest for two (Moxley: "Straight off the Best of Earthquake!") but McGuinness comes back with a knee for two as frustration is beginning to set in. A slight miscue sets up a HARD

clothesline for two on Sami as the Crew is getting nervous on commentary. They're nervous enough that they get up for a distraction, allowing Sami to slam Nigel off the top and drop a big elbow for two.

Now it's Sami going up but he gets caught in the Tower of London (hanging Diamond Cutter) for two as Moxley makes the save. Another distraction lets Parks take Nigel down but Sami only gets two. The referee gets bumped and Moxley comes in with a Boss Man Slam to Nigel, giving Sami a VERY close two. Parks throws in a chain and that's finally enough to pin McGuinness.

Rating: C+. I liked this far better than I was expecting though that's mainly due to Moxley. It's clear that he's going to be a big star in the future and the commentary was absolutely hilarious. Callihan was more of a comedy act here and given his size there's nothing surprising about that. Parks was just kind of there but a three man team is better than two.

Nigel would move on to ROH around 2003 and since video of that era is hard to find, this is as good as I can find from around that time. From Joe vs. Punk II.

Chad Collyer/Nigel McGuinness vs. BJ Whitmer/Dan Maff

Collyer/Nigel have Ricky Steamboat with them while Whitmer/Maff have Mick Foley. It's the whole wrestling vs. hardcore jazz. Steamboat and Foley started to hook up in WCW but I guess they figured that one of the best heels vs. one of the best faces would make too much sense and therefore money so they bailed on it immediately. Steamboat asks the four wrestlers to get on the floor because he wants to talk to Foley.

The audio here is AWFUL and I had no idea what Steamboat was talking about for part of it. Ok now I can a bit. The fans are saying speak up. Last night Foley issued a challenge for this tag match and Steamboat says it's not about skill but it's

about the style the guys use. Steamboat calls it garbage wrestling because you use things like garbage cans in it. "In fact Mick I got an e-mail today from the Chicago sanitation department that says when your next novel fails they have a job for you cleaning up the garbage." BURN.

Foley gets on the mic and makes fun of Steamboat for being too serious and not an entertaining talker. Foley talks about Steamboat winning the title in 1989 right here in Chicago from Ric Flair (Chi-Town Rumble, well worth checking out). Steamboat may be the greatest pure wrestler of all time. I'm not sure "may be" is needed here. However, saying someone is the greatest pure wrestler of all time "is like saying someone is the greatest softcore adult actor of all time."

Foley defends hardcore wrestling because it's about toughness and giving it all you have. He wants to know how long Steamboat plans to ride Flair's coattails (even though Flair is a washed up loser). The fans are split here. Steamboat comes back with I know Flair, I've worked with Flair and you Mick Foley are no Ric Flair. Foley blasts Flair, saying he has a banana nose, orange teeth and looks like Barbara Bush in drag.

Steamboat says those were funny when Funk said them 20 years ago. Foley comes up with some new ones, like Flair says the same things time after time and carries Batista's bags and sucked up to HHH. Oh and Flair has botox. This is HILARIOUS. Here's the real burn: "I'm no Ric Flair because I knew when my time was done, I stepped aside for the sake of younger guys." Bear in mind that about three and a half years later Foley won the TNA World Title, although TNA was still pretty awesome at this point.

Oh hey we have a match to get to. Everyone shakes hands pre match. Ok so it's Nigel vs. Whitmer to get us going. We go over who has the best trainer in this and Maff is kind of left out in the cold. This is under pure rules, which is an overly complicated system that means you have a limited amount of rope breaks and no punches. Off to Maff as the pure guys are dominating with a lot of arm drags in a nice touch. And here are the Carnage Crew to jump Foley and a brawl breaks out. Not long enough to grade but it was pretty basic up to this point.

Steamboat goes off on the Carnage Crew for ruining the match and even calls them a bunch of dickheads. Announcer: "STEAMBOAT SAID DICKHEADS!!!!!" Ok so now the match is starting again but it's under hardcore rules. Well sure why not? It's a bit brawl to start and once they're on the floor Foley drills McGuinness with the mic. They're into the crowd already. The Crew is gone.

Maff cracks a water bottle over the head of Collyer and McGuinness gets taken down by a chair. Ok so now we're into the ring and there are a few chairs involved. This is a total brawl and Steamboat is back now. Ok he wants it to be pure wrestling again. McGuinness gets all technical and such and gets a slick rollup on Whitmer for the pin.

Rating: C+. That's for the whole thing. Steamboat and Foley were by far the best things about this but I don't think that surprises anyone. The idea of mixing both styles was interesting but it needed more than it had here. The main conclusion I can draw from this though: MAN WCW was stupid for not following up on Steamboat vs. Foley in 92.

Next up we'll take a look at a match from ROH Final Battle 2006 against Jimmy Rave, which was the result of an open challenge by Rave.

Jimmy Rave vs. Nigel McGuinness

Well that didn't take long to sanction and sign did it? It's weird seeing Wolfe with spiked hair. He's ridiculously popular though, just like in TNA so of course he can't be pushed right? They shake left hands for some odd reason. That's different. This isn't much but to be fair they have a feud going so this works.

I still don't get the appeal of Rave though. Nigel does an insane submission hold where he locks Rave's arm around his leg and traps the other arm behind Nigel's back and bends backwards which looked like it was going to rip it off. The crowd goes oooooo at that. Nigel is apparently a big deal here. Nigel takes his head off with a clothesline but it gets two. Oh I'm sorry: it was a lariat.

Tower of London hits and Nigel isn't sure what to do. Rave hits a Pedigree for one. Rave counters a Hulking Up Nigel into a Crippler Crossface. As impressive as Rave has been, I still just don't care about him. Nigel hits a Tower of London (Diamond Cutter) onto the apron, which would be about the same as the mat wouldn't it? It gets two either way so it doesn't really matter.

And then after getting destroyed for about five minutes, Rave gets the heel hook and Nigel taps despite never having his leg worked on at all. I HATE moves like that. If that's the case, why in the world would he wait almost fifteen minutes before going for it? At least with a strike like Sweet Chin Music

it's a knockout move. This is just a submission which makes a part of the body hurt. Why go for the Crossface earlier? That makes NO SENSE. It's completely anti-psychology and that's just irritating. Plus it's Jimmy Rave so it's even more annoying. Rave wants a world title shot.

Rating: B-. Totally annoying ending aside, this was a pretty solid match I guess. There were a ton of near falls but you could see the ending coming a mile away with about three minutes to go. Nigel looks dominant but let's push Rave because...well just because! Didn't like the ending at all but the rest was good.

Nigel would become the ROH Pure Champion in 2005 before losing it to Bryan Danielson who unified it with the world title. Here's a rematch between the two at the Sixth Anniversary Show from February 23, 2008 with Nigel defending his world title. To date, he's the only two time world champion in company history.

ROH World Title: Bryan Danielson vs. Nigel McGuinness

The fans are split here and it's a feeling out process to start with Nigel grabbing a wristlock, only to have Danielson dropkick the knee out to put him down. Back up and they fight over a test of strength until Bryan takes him down by the legs. There's a bow and arrow hold to the champion before pinning Nigel's arms down to the mat for two. Back up and Danielson avoids Nigel's big lariat before calling on the crowd's xenophobia by starting a USA chant.

Nigel takes him down with a headlock takeover but Bryan easily counters into a headscissors. McGuinness fights to the ropes but is very frustrated at not being able to slow down the challenger. Danielson is taken into the corner for some chops but does a headstand in the corner and catches Nigel with a dropkick. Nigel is sent to the floor and taken out with the FLYING GOAT as things speed up.

Back in and Bryan hits a missile dropkick before suplexing Nigel down

with ease. McGuinness rolls to the apron for a breather before shoving the referee down for the lame DQ. He grabs the mic and says that the wankers in the crowd got the title match that they wanted and goes to leave, only to run into Austin Aries, Delirious, and I believe Kevin Steen and Roderick Strong. Aries says get back in the ring or go through all of them. McGuinness gets back inside and we're at it again.

Danielson chops away in the corner but Nigel gets in a shot to the shoulder and sends it into the buckle and post. The fans shout SCREW YOU NIGEL and he tells them to chant louder. Off to an arm scissors before Nigel slaps Bryan in the face, making the fans beg Bryan to mess him up. The champion wraps Bryan's arm around the rope and then the post while mocking the USA chant. Back in and Nigel traps the arm down and cranks on the neck but Bryan comes back with a big kick to the head and a knee to the ribs.

Bryan is starting to feel it and sends Nigel to the apron where a running kick to the back sends the Brit to the floor. Nigel isn't done yet though and backdrops Danielson over the top to the floor and the fans quiet down again. Bryan reverses a whip into the barricade before dumping Nigel into the crowd, setting up a HUGE springboard dive over the steel and into the crowd. Back in and McGuinness blocks another missile dropkick but gets caught in a triangle choke.

Nigel's big lariat puts Danielson down and the fans complain that it's the same move McGuinness always uses. Note that they're complaining about this in a BRYAN DANIELSON match. Danielson sits on the top rope and catapults Nigel out to the floor again. McGuinness blocks another FLYING GOAT with an uppercut (thankfully Bryan was clearly stopping before he reached the ropes), setting up the Tower of London on the floor. The champion is busted open a bit as well.

Back in again and Nigel puts Danielson in Cattle Mutilation (Bryan's hold) but Bryan rolls around into a cover for two. Danielson ducks a big lariat but crotches himself on the ropes, setting up a middle rope clothesline and another Tower of London for two. There's a seated armbar as Nigel remembers the arm work from earlier. Danielson raises his arm and waves to the crowd as he makes it into the ropes for the break. Back

up and Danielson hits a Rolling Chaos Theory out of the corner to put both guys down.

They strike it out until McGuinness is sat on top for a belly to back superplex for two. There's the real Cattle Mutilation but Nigel rolls over, only to be caught in a tiger suplex for two. Danielson fires off a bunch of elbows to the ribs and puts on an armbar followed by a triangle choke. McGuinness gets his arm up at two drops and finally gets his feet in the ropes. Bryan pounds on him in the corner and asks for a ten count but Nigel headbutts him down, injuring Danielson's bad eye from a recent injury. The big running lariat sets up a bunch of seated elbows to the head. Bryan is out as Nigel puts on the seated armbar to win.

Rating: B-. It's a good match but I wasn't feeling it all that well. The biggest problem here was there was some deal with Danielson not attacking the head and having a bad eye but the announcers expected us to know what those stories were about. That's one thing WWE commentary is great at: you're always going to hear the story of a match very quickly and leave very little confusion. The action here was solid but it felt like they were trying to have a long match rather than a good one. Also if you're going to do the false DQ finish, do it after six minutes into the match.

Nigel would hold the world title for more than a year after this, eventually dropping it to Jerry Lynn. His next and last major stop was in TNA, where he had the awesome ring name of Desmond Wolfe. Nigel's first feud was with Kurt Angle, leading to a 2/3 falls match at Final Resolution 2009. The first fall was pin only, the second was submission only, and the third was inside of a cage with escape only.

Desmond Wolfe vs. Kurt Angle

Angle is still in a Mafia shirt even though that's long since dead. They have a ton of time here so they start slowly with ground work. Angle grabs the leg and down to the mat we go. Off to a cobra clutch by Wolfe. Lots of technical stuff here which is pretty solid of course given who is in there. Hammerlock by Angle and we look at some guy and his kid in the

crowd for no apparent reason at all.

Multiple covers get nothing for Wolfe. A knee drop misses for Wolfe so Angle goes after the leg. Headlock takedown and it's Wolfe in control. They're in first gear here or maybe a mild second one but it's still entertaining. The dueling chants have already started. Angle fights up and gets a buckle bomb for our first big high impact move. We've been at this almost 8 minutes now so you can tell this is going slowly.

Wolfe in control again with Wolfe working on the arm a bit more. Modified cobra clutch goes on for a bit but Kurt fights back. Overhead belly to belly but Kurt can't get the Angle Slam. A single arm DDT hits but Wolfe misses a big clothesline misses. Rolling Germans go on in a set of about five or six.

Angle goes up and gets caught in the Tower of London for two. It's a Diamond Cutter off the top if you're wondering. The lariat misses again and it's another attempt at the Tower of London but Kurt escapes and the Angle Slam gets two. Angle tries the moonsault and, say it with me, it misses by a mile. Clothesline hits this time and the Tower of London gets the first fall for Wolfe. Really should have been after the clothesline.

Wolfe goes straight for the arm and Kurt is in big trouble already. The crank that Wolfe has it on there is INSANE. Kurt rolls out of it though and it's time for a figure four out of nowhere. The rope is grabbed and we're back to the arm again. Wolfe puts on a ton of arm holds and they're all at least somewhat different. Kurt reverses one of them into the ankle lock and Wolfe is in trouble.

Wolfe reverses into the LeBell Lock minus the crossface. That gets rolled through and it's back to the ankle lock. This is a technical masterpiece so far. Angle reverses ANOTHER arm hold into the ankle lock which Wolfe reverses into an ankle

lock of his own. Angle grabs something like a triangle choke which gets reversed into an arm lock again. Triangle choke goes on but Kurt runs through it into an ankle lock again and it's the grapevine added that ends fall 2.

Ok so it's now escape to win it. Oh that guy they showed earlier is Jason Williams of the Orlando Magic. WWE is in town tonight so they're making fun of it somehow. Angle puts Wolfe down and goes up so they fight on the ropes a bit. Wolfe rams the arm into the cage which is rather smart and basic. Wolfe goes up so Kurt does the same thing to Wolfe's leg. I like that as it's nice storytelling.

Wolfe knocks him off the ropes so Kurt pops up and throws him off in the running suplex. Desmond is busted BAD. Kurt goes up but Wolfe gets a boot up which might have hit Angle's bad arm. It was Wolfe's bad leg though so everyone is down. Desmond calls for the door to be open but Kurt makes the save again. Wolfe taps forever but Kurt won't let go. Desmond passes out and Kurt climbs out. Wolfe almost made it but couldn't quite do it.

Rating: A. Great match here with some incredible back and forth stuff in the submission round. I don't tend to like matches like these but this was very fun to see. Wolfe being left laying like that at the end was great but I would have had him stay there until Kurt had won. Either way, great match and the whole thing worked incredibly well. Brutal match with a clear winner, which is the point of matches like these.

We'll wrap this up with a match from 1PW out of England with Desmond Wolfe facing British wrestler Lionheart from The New Divide on May 29, 2010.

Desmond Wolfe vs. Lionheart

Lionheart is a smaller guy with little hair and a lot of tattoos. Wolfe seems to be the favorite and definitely gets a bigger reaction. This is a rematch from a three way from about a year and a half ago for the ROH Title. They shake hands to start and there's no commentary so I'm not clear on the backstory. Feeling out process to start with both guys working on the arm but spinning up to applause.

Back up and they run the ropes for a bit until Lionheart scores with a dropkick. Wolfe avoids another dropkick and it's a stalemate. Desmond takes him into the corner to start and scores with an elbow but Lionheart shoves him down and hits a middle rope missile dropkick, only to have Desmond punch him in the face and throw Lionheart outside. Lionheart is holding his arm and takes a walk around the ring for a breather.

Back in and Wolfe grabs a front facelock before cranking on the arm like a smart wrestler should. Lionheart is getting annoyed at Wolfe for not trying as hard as he could so they slug it out with Lionheart taking over and getting two off a corner clothesline. Wolfe goes right back to the arm and suplexes him down by said arm for two. More shots to the arm get the same followed by Wolfe countering a sunset flip by slamming Lionheart's arm into the mat.

Lionheart spins out of an armbar but is kicked in the face to stop any comeback attempt. Some European uppercuts have Lionheart staggered but he gets a boot up in the corner and hits a nice Blockbuster for two. A few slams and a legdrop get two on Wolfe as the fans are getting into this. Wolfe avoids a charge into the corner and hits a quick forearm to the chest for two. A hard running European uppercut in the corner sets up the Tower of London but Lionheart holds onto the ropes. Another uppercut is blocked with a boot to the face but Wolfe stops him on the top and superplexes Lionheart down for two.

Off to that seated armbar and the fans are really into things now, even though it's not that great. Lionheart uses the free arm to break the hold and comes back with a Rock Bottom, only to miss a frog splash. Back to the armbar but Lionheart sweeps the leg and gets two off a rollup. They slug it out again with the fans entirely behind Desmond.

Lionheart takes over and gets two off a high cross body, followed by a superkick and frog splash for two. Another frog splash is broken up by Wolfe shoving the referee into the ropes and the Tower of London connects for two. The running lariat is countered into a rollup but Wolfe counters the rollup into a rollup of his own for the bridging pin.

Rating: B-. It wasn't a bad way to spend fifteen minutes but I never got invested in the match. Neither guy was playing a heel here and I really know nothing about Lionheart so this was hard to care about. Wolfe was very popular here and it was a good showcase for him, but Lionheart wasn't the best choice of an opponent.

Wolfe puts Lionheart over after the match.

Nigel McGuinness is a guy that had every tool you need to be a big star but injuries and having Hepatitis B brought his career to an end. He could go in the ring and easily hung in there with Kurt Angle and Bryan Danielson. I have no idea what more you need from a guy than what he had and he was on the verge of breaking through in TNA, only to have everything fall apart under Bischoff and Hogan. I'm shocked too.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of on the History of Summerslam at Amazon for just \$4 at:

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for just \$4 at: