Wrestler of the Day – April 11: Godfather

It’s time once again for everybody to come aboard the WOTD train. It’s the Godfather.

There aren’t many people with more gimmicks than Godfather as he’s been around for a very long time. We’ll start in the GWF (short lived promotion out of Dallas that used to air on ESPN) with his first gimmick: the Soultaker. I’m not sure on an exact date on this but some hints during the commentary would likely put this in July 1991.

Soultaker vs. Patriot

This is part of a tournament for the North American Title, the top belt in the company. Patriot is quickly sent into the corner but Soultaker has no interest in following up. A headlock gets Patriot nowhere either so he hammers away and clotheslines Soultaker out to the floor. Patriot is rammed into the apron and then the corner back inside as Soultaker gets his first advantage.

An abdominal stretch (called a standing guillotine by the announcer) puts Patriot in even more trouble. That lasts about as long as any other abdominal stretch so Soultaker gets two off a splash in the corner. A horrible nerve hold goes nowhere for Soultaker but he sends a charging Patriot out to the floor. Patriot, ever the hear, wraps Soultaker’s legs around the post a few times but misses the Patriot Missile top rope shoulder. Soultaker misses another splash in the corner and a rollup gives Patriot the pin.

Rating: D. Patriot was rarely more than adequate and it was apparent here. At the same time though, Soultaker was pretty

lousy here as well with almost nothing but basic power stuff and that lame nerve hold. Granted he never was all that great even at the peak of his career as it was all character but that's another story.

Speaking of characters, Soultaker became one of his better known characters when he was brought into the WWE. Wearing gray skull paint, he became Papa Shango, a voodoo priest. Somehow this was enough to get a WWF Title shot at Bret Hart on the last original Saturday Night's Main Event. I apologize in advance for how lousy this review is.

WWF Title: Bret Hart vs. Papa Shango

Bret says he's not overlooking Shango here before he gets Shawn Michaels at Survivor Series. Dang those two were just joined at the hip. Hart had won the title in a TOTAL shocker at a house show in Canada as Flair more or less said he wasn't resigning when his contract was up. I mean it was just like a token title defense for Flair and Bret made him give up to just stun the heck out of the crowd.

Unfortunately that wasn't on home video for years and I only saw it within the last two years or so. Bret wasn't ready for the spot yet, but they realized he was all they had because they couldn't, KEEP THE BELT ON THE VETERAN SAVAGE or anything like that. They made Savage the commentator despite him holding the title all summer long. Why in the world they never did Bret vs. Savage is beyond me.

This is more or less a Bret Hart 101 match. He starts off hot then messes up before getting the living tar beaten out of him for a good while. It's amazing how good Bret was at selling for big guys. We have a long sequence, as in about 4 minutes of Shango beating up Bret. Shango is more commonly known as Godfather to younger fans by the way. Anyway, Bret of course makes the comeback and hits his signature series to get the Sharpshooter for the tap out.

Rating: C+. It was a standard TV match and that's fine as it got Bret some national exposure which is what the whole point of these shows were. He would have a forgotten classic with Shawn in about two weeks at Survivor Series before eventually moving on to Yoko and Wrestlemania. Dang Bret never really had the defining moment in his title reign come to think of it.

Here he is against another supernatural character from a home video called Invasion of the Bodyslammers.

Undertaker vs. Papa Shango

They stare each other down until Shango chokes Undertaker into the corner. Undertaker does the same to him and follows up with Old School. A kick to the face has almost no effect on the dead man but he misses an elbow to give Shango an opening. Not that it really matters as Undertaker lands on his feet after a clothesline puts him over the top.

Taker Stuns him onto the top rope but gets blasted by pyro out of Shango's voodoo stick. Somehow the referee doesn't notice either that, Papa hitting Undertaker in the back with a chair or whipping Undertaker into the steps. Back in and three slams have no effect on Undertaker. Some elbows have the save result as Undertaker sits up. The jumping clothesline sets up the chokeslam to pin Shango.

Rating: D+. Better but still not something worth going out of your way to see. That voodoo stick getting no reaction from the referee was too much for me to go with, but to be fair Undertaker would blow that out of the water very soon. The match wasn't anything you wouldn't see on a house show.

We'll skip the Ultimate Warrior stuff and go to a match Shango might actually win. This is from WWF Mania, which was a Saturday morning recap show with an exclusive match or two. From March 6, 1993.

Papa Shango vs. Typhoon

Shango bounces back off some collisions and what would become the World's Strongest Slam crushes him to the floor. Back in and we get the switching arms joke instead of a test of strength which still isn't funny. Typhoon misses an elbow and a splash so we hit a sleeper from Shango. He fights out and clotheslines Shango over the top but Papa sprays sparks from the voodoo stick for the DQ.

Rating: F. Do I need to explain this one? Moving on.

Here's a big shift for Shango from March 15, 1993 on Raw.

Bob Backlund vs. Papa Shango

Backlund trips him up a few times as I have to listen to the horrible Rob Bartlett on commentary. He was a comedian who was given this spot for no explained reason. Shango takes over with a test of strength but Bob grabs the arm and drives an elbow into the nose. Papa comes back with a backbreaker as Rob goes into a horrible Vince impression. Papa chokes with a boot in the corner, making Backlund look shocked that someone would cheat. We hit the chinlock for a LONG stretch as Gorilla wants to beat up Heenan and Bartlett. A slam gets two on Backlund but he grabs a small package for a surprise pin.

Rating: D. That chinlock just would not end. Shango is the kind of guy that was a nice contrast to Backlund but it didn't work here. Interesting bit of trivia: Shango was rumored to be brought back and be revealed as the reason Backlund went nuts in 1994. Thankfully this didn't happen and was never mentioned at all but it would have been different.

Shango would leave in the middle of 1993 and not be back until 1995, under the name of Kama. He would be in the 1995 King of the Ring tournament against a fairly big name.

KOTR Quarterfinals: Kama vs. Shawn Michaels

Shawn beat King Kong Bundy and Kama beat Duke Droese. Kama was

kind of feuding with Taker at the time, as was the entire Million Dollar Team. Shawn's music is messed up here, opening with the guitar solo instead of the regular opening. That's very odd indeed. Kama is more commonly known as Papa Shango or Godfather depending on what era you're from.

The crowd is into Shawn as he was at the point on the card where he was bigger than the midcard but not quite into the main event yet, sort of like Austin after Mania 13. Joe Frazier is here. This is a very standard Shawn match which means it's the best match of the night. Kama works over Shawn, who of course has a bad back as all faces are required to have at some point in their career, until Shawn starts his comeback.

And then we get the evil of the clock on the screen, which means this is going to end in a draw. After a very fast 15 minutes that likely wasn't really 15 minutes, Shawn has a sunset flip on Kama but as the hand is coming down for three the buzzer goes off and so does the crowd. Why in the WORLD would you have a draw here to eliminate the guy that is likely the most over in your whole company?

I have a bad feeling I know why, but I want to convince myself that's not really the reason to keep myself from going on a killing spree. Shawn hits the kick after the match to get the fans to put down their pitchforks, but DANG this was stupid. Seriously, why in the world would you get rid of your most over guy? Does Vince actually believe that Savio freaking Vega is going to be enough of a reason for people to care about this horrible show? That's flat out stupid. If Vince believes that, then he deserved to almost get put out of business in a year and a half.

Rating: B. Like I said, this is likely going to be the best match of the entire night. Shawn was on the top of his game around this time and no one other than Bret could stay with him in the ring and this was no exception. Shawn carried this

thing as Kama's basic as heck offense wasn't able to do a thing at all.

Kama would become part of the Million Dollar Team around this time, meaning he was part of the feud with Undertaker. He stole the Urn at Wrestlemania and melted it into a chain. Of course you know this means war in the form of a casket match at Summerslam 1995.

Undertaker vs. Kama

Kama is more famous as Godfather and is the Supreme Fighting Machine here, which is kind of an MMA gimmick. Taker pounds away in the corner to start before choking Kama down, only to be kicked in the back when he looks at the casket. Taker knocks Kama over the top and onto the casket to freak him out before hitting a quick splash in the corner. Old School connects and Kama is thrown into the casket but pops right back out. A top rope clothesline puts Taker down for a second but he sits right back up.

Kama hits a quick belly to belly suplex but Taker is right back up again. He throws Kama into the casket again but DiBiase makes a quick save. Kama pounds on Taker in the corner and clotheslines him onto the top of the casket where DiBiase can get in some shots. The managers almost get into it but we're lucky enough to get more of Taker and Kama's slow brawling. Kama posts him and rams Taker face first into the casket. A suplex onto the casket works over the back a bit but Kame, the genius that he is, can't open the casket with Undertaker on top of it.

They both stand on the casket and Undertaker backdrops Kama into the ring to block a piledriver. The fans get WAY into this all of a sudden but Kama takes him down with a powerslam. The genius covers Taker but he sits up a few seconds later. Off to a chinlock because this match hasn't gone on long enough already. Bearer shoves Kama's feet off the ropes to

break up the hold so it's off to a headlock.

Taker finally fights up but gets whipped into the corner to stop him cold again. The jumping clothesline puts Kama down and a regular clothesline puts him inside the casket, but Undertaker falls in with him and the lid closes. Kama fights out again and hits a neckbreaker in the ring to put the Dead Man down again. Not that it matters as Taker stands up, hits the chokeslam and tombstone and throws Kama into the casket for the win.

Rating: D. WAY too long for the level of "action" in this match. Also did anyone think Kama had a chance against Undertaker in a major match? There was nothing here and the match running seventeen minutes didn't help it at all. Undertaker would move onto a feud with King Mabel which was at least different than the year of Undertaker vs. DiBiase.

Kama would be gone to the USWA for 1996 and a good chunk of 1997, coming back in the summer. He would return to the WWF in June and join the Nation of Domination as something resembling an enforcer. Here's a war he was in at In Your House #20.

Nation of Domination vs. Ken Shamrock/Ahmed Johnson/Disciples of Apocalypse

This is a ten man tag with the Nation comprised of Faarooq, Rock, Kama, D'Lo Brown and the now heel Mark Henry. The match has been billed as a war of attrition which would imply survival and elimination rules, but this is one fall to a finish. Skull starts with D'Lo and Brown goes to the eyes for an early advantage. An atomic drop slows D'Lo down though and it's off to Shamrock for a back elbow to the jaw. A double tag brings in Kama and Chainz with Mustafa pounding away in the corner.

Some quick elbows have Kama in trouble so he tags off to Mark for some raw power. Henry wants Ahmed though and the fans till care about Johnson at this point. Johnson wins a slugout and

slams Henry down, only to have the Nation come in with some cheap shots to take over. D'Lo hits a spinebuster to put Ahmed down and a long distance frog splash gets no cover. Instead it's off to Faarooq who walks into a spinebuster from Ahmed but Rock breaks up the Pearl River Plunge.

8-Ball gets the tag and powerslams Faarooq down for two as the good guys start speeding things up. It's off to Rock vs. Shamrock which is one of the matchups that people have wanted to see. Rock scores with a quick DDT and stomps away in the corner before bringing in Kama to miss a charge. Skull and 8-Ball take turns on Kama as we get some o the original twin magic. Kama will have none of that though and takes Skull into the Nation corner for a beating.

Rock comes in with the yet to be named People's Elbow for two and it's back to Faarooq to punch Skull in the jaw a few times. Skull comes back with a faceplant but Rock breaks up a hot tag attempt. Henry comes in to pound on Skull for about ten seconds before it's back to Kama for a chinlock. D'Lo gets a tag but misses a moonsault, finally allowing for the hot tag off to Shamrock. Everything breaks down and the ring is cleared except for Shamrock to ankle lock the Rock for the win.

Rating: C-. It's not a great match or anything and the elimination rules would have helped things a lot, but it was certainly better than some of the other stuff tonight. Above all else though the fans CARED about this. It wasn't some dull filler match that was there to make sure a card was complete but rather a match with characters and a story we've been given reason to care about. That's a big step up from a lot of this show.

Godfather would evolve into a pimp after leaving the Nation and go on something resembling a run, culminating in this match from April 12, 1999 on Raw.

Intercontinental Title: Goldust vs. Godfather

Goldust scores with a quick clothesline and some right hands, only to be taken down with a clothesline from Godfather. Something resembling a suplex gets two for the champion so he sends Godfather into the steps. Back in and Goldust pounds away rather slowly before hooking the chinlock. Godfather fights up and hits the Ho Train but misses a charge and gets backdropped to the floor. Goldie takes off a buckle pad but gets sent into it chest first, setting up the Death Valley Driver to give Godfather the title.

Rating: D. This is around the time when the IC Title started to die. There's no reason for Godfather or Goldust or Road Dogg or anyone like that to have the belt and there's no way to get invested into such short reigns. It's a big reason why the title means nothing today: there's no reason to care about any of the champions so we don't care when the titles change hands.

And here's the PPV rematch from In Your House #28.

Intercontinental Title: Godfather vs. Goldust

No real story here and Godfather is defending. Goldust has Blue Meanie while Godfather has his ladies. Godfather won't even offer Goldust the girls as he usually does. The champion takes over with some clotheslines to start and faceplants Goldust down onto the mat. Goldust bails to the floor for a meeting with Meanie and tries to bail up the aisle.

Back in and Godfather gets two off a slam and a legdrop but Meanie's distraction lets Goldust take over. Another Meanie distraction lets Goldust load up some powder to throw in Godfather's eyes but Godfather kicks it into Goldust's eyes. The blinded Goldust beats up Meanie and gives him Shattered Dreams by mistake. Meanie accidentally hits Goldust low, allowing Godfather to hit the Death Valley Driver to retain.

Rating: D+. This was just a quick comedy match and there's nothing wrong with that. Godfather was a very fun and laid back character which is exactly what a wrestling company needs at times. There's no pressure, no emotional burden and nothing you have to focus on. It's just having a good time with a wrestling character and giving the fans a breather.

Godfather would team up with D'Lo Brown in the midcard and get a spot on Survivor Series 1999.

Team Godfather/D'Lo Brown vs. Team Dudley Boys

Godfather, D'Lo Brown, Headbangers
Dudley Boys, Acolytes

The Dudleys are brand new, having been around maybe a month or two. This is the debut of Brown as Godfather's partner in pimping. The Headbangers are dressed as pimps as well which is pretty funny. Bubba still has a bad stutter here which was his whole gimmick for a few months. Godfather makes fun of him to even further tick the Dudleys off. The Acolytes are freshly out of the Corporate Ministry which has broken up and are just big tough guys now.

Bubba vs. Mosh (in afro) start things off. Bubba steals said afro but things speed up and the Dudleys are in trouble. A HARD clothesline takes Mosh down and it's off to D-Von. The Dudleys were awesome at this point and were like nothing anyone had seen in years. Even their look was totally different and it worked very well. Off to Thrasher who has an afro held on with a chinstrap.

Bradshaw comes in and pounds away on Thrasher a bit before pounding him upside the head. Thrasher misses a corner charge and the Clothesline eliminates him quickly. Off to Mosh vs. Farrooq with the latter missing a charge in the corner but not being affected by it that badly. Back to D-Von as Jerry talks about wanting ho's for Christmas. Mosh hits the running crotch attack to D-Von's back but it's off to Bubba via a blind tag

and the 3D puts out Mosh, making it 4-2.

Brown comes in with a forearm to the head of Bubba and a legdrop for two. For absolutely no apparent reason, Bradshaw blasts Brown with the chair for a DQ, and does the same to Bubba as well, knocking him out cold. D-Von and Farrooq both want the pin and get in a fight over it, resulting in a double countout for a double elimination despite neither of them being legal. That would be the Dudleys' first real feud.

Back in the ring Bubba gets two on Brown as it's apparently 2-1 now. A suplex gets two for Bubba and it's time for the bouncing punches from Ray. Brown comes back with a Sky High for two and loads up a top rope rana, only to get caught in a middle rope sitout powerbomb for two which looked awesome. A double clothesline puts both guys down and it's hot tag to Godfather. The Ho Train sets up the Low Down for the final elimination.

Rating: C. I remember reading someone say that Godfather was the perfect opening act because you were guaranteed a good pop whenever he was out there. The more I see of him in matches like this, the more I agree with that statement. The guy wasn't that great or anything, but the fans loved him and he was always a fun character that you didn't have to take too seriously. That kind of fun character is a great choice for an opener and this was a fine opener here too.

We'll skip ahead most of a year here and get to Summerslam 2000. Godfather is now Goodfather and part of the Right to Censor in another gimmick to add to the pile. Not much story needed here other than that.

<u>Right to Censor vs. Too Cool/Rikishi</u>

Too Cool and Rikishi are WAY over at this point and even won the tag titles over the summer. The RTC is Richards/Goodfather/Bull Buchanan at this point. Some of Goodfather's former women come out with Rikishi, one of which

would become known as Victoria. It's a big brawl to start until we get Scotty pounding on Buchanan. Hotty backflips over Buchanan and pulls him down before getting two off a high cross body. Off to Sexay for a double suplex before Goodfather comes in and falls to the floor. He shoves Victoria down before punching Sexay in the face to take over.

Buchanan gets in some shots of his own and it's off to Richards for his cheap shots. A powerbomb gets two and JR sounds stunned. Steven gets crotched on top and superplexed down allowing for the hot tag to Rikishi. The fat man cleans house and Victoria throws Richards back in the ring. The RTC is sent into the corner with Too Cool being launched into all of them at once, but Bull gets in a quick ax kick to take the Samoan down. Scotty loads up the Worm but Steven kicks his head off for the pin.

Rating: C. Basic six man tag here to get the crowd going. A fast paced act like Too Cool and Rikishi is always a great choice to start up a show as the crowd gets fired up for the entrance and hopefully stays hot for the rest of the show. The RTC was a fine choice for a heel stable as they took away what the fans wanted to see and the people were glad to see them get beaten up.

Godfather and Buchanan would win the Tag Team Titles around this time and defended them at Rebellion 2000 (European PPV).

Tag Titles: Hardy Boys vs. Right to Censor

Buchanan and Goodfather are champions here. Val Venis is with them here as well. Hardys are way over of course. The Hardys speed things up to start and Matt kind of botches both tandem moves but nothing too bad. Jeff and Buchanan start us off in a preview of the Rumble. More fast paced stuff here but Jeff plays to the crowd and Goodfather drills him with a clothesline from the apron for his troubles.

Matt comes in and the pace somehow slows down. Heel

miscommunication puts Buchanan in trouble. The legdrop gets two and Matt hits the post. He may have injured his shoulder too. Goodfather shows some psychology and works on the arm. That's another idea of psychology: if someone hurts a body part GO AFTER IT. If someone hurts their arm you wouldn't go after their knee would you?

The only one of these four still in WWE (for the time being at least) gets a DDT and avoids the not Ho Train to set up the tag to Jeff. Double Whisper in the Wind (doesn't have a name yet) takes down the champions. The standard Hardy double finishing combination hits Goodfather but Buchanan distracts the referee for Val to hit a Money Shot on Jeff. Pin is rather academic now.

Rating: C-. Slightly better here but still nothing all that special. This worked fine for what it was though and it gave the fans a nice pop because the Hardys were still rather over. There was a flow to this match which is something a lot of the matches have been lacking tonight so far. Pretty decent though.

Godfather would leave again in 2001 but make a quick comeback in early 2002, including this Raw match from January 28.

Lance Storm/Christian vs. Godfather/Diamond Dallas Page

Apparently Page is a client of Godfather's escort service. Godfather and Storm start things off and a big back elbow puts Lance down. Christian pulls the rope down to stop Godfather and send him to the floor. Back inside a Storm dropkick gets two and Christian comes in to stomp away for a bit. A double Canadian suplex gets two and it's back to Storm for a legdrop for two. Christian gets another two count but starts having a fit. Not hot tag brings in DDP who cleans part of the house. Christian goes up but gets crotched, allowing Godfather to hit the running splash, followed by a Diamond Cutter to Storm for the pin.

Rating: D. This came and went and was nothing of note. Godfather didn't fit at all in the new WWF and it was very clear in a hurry. Page didn't work in WWE either as there was no connection with the fans. Page grew up in WCW before the fans' eyes, but here he's a guy who used to be a big deal in WCW and that's it. That isn't going to work and never has before.

That was pretty much it for Godfather until he was brought onto a Hulk Hogan tour of Australia as the Pimp Fatha, where he would face Heidenreich on one of the four shows.

Pimp Fatha vs. Heidenreich

Godfather does the usual intro and offers Heidenreich the women. He actually takes them up on it but a fight breaks out anyway and the match is on. Back inside and Heidenreich hammers away before getting yelled at as the referee. Godfather charges into an elbow in the corner and we hit a quick chinlock. Heidenreich tries an elbow after Godfather has already rolled away and a missed splash leads to what was supposed to be a rollup but was more like Heidenreich laying down so Godfather can grab the tights for the pin. Barely even a match but neither guy has wrestled on the big stage in years.

Godfather is the kind of guy that was far more entertaining than good. The pimp character could have opened house shows for YEARS and kept getting huge pops. No he wasn't much to watch in the ring, but not everyone needs to be. I'll give him this though: not many people could go to that many characters and have more than one be memorable. He was very charismatic and that's more important than being good in the ring.

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