

Wrestler of the Day – April 22: British Bulldog

We're jumping across the pond today with the British Bulldog Davey Boy Smith.

Smith started in England in 1978 as Young David. Here's the earliest match I can find from him, from 1982.

Fit Finlay vs. Young David

Finlay is Irish Middleweight Champion. As is traditional with British wrestling, this is under a round system (eight five minute rounds here) and it's 2/3 falls. The ring is fall smaller than most that you would see in America. David cranks on the arm to start and gets a quick one off a sunset flip. They hit the mat for some arm work until Finlay grabs a wristlock. David spins around and grabs one of his own as we're firmly in technical mode here.

Finlay comes back with a leg lock as the well dressed crowd looks on intently. David grabs a wristlock but Finlay bridges out and snapmares David down. Off to an arm lock by Finlay as this is being treated as something serious. It's very interesting to see something as different as we're getting here. Finlay goes back to the wristlock and even a David slam can't break the grip. A snapmare puts Finlay down and the first round ends.

The match is clipped to the start of round four (every version I can find of this has the clip) and they stare each other down. Finlay takes over with some elbows to the back of the head before bending David's leg around Finlay's neck. David escapes by KICKING HIM IN THE FACE but it's right back to the hold. Finlay drops a leg on David's leg and cranks on it even more until the Young one spins out to escape.

Not that it matters as Fit grabs the leg again and we can hear some fans shouting boring. David escapes again and, say it with me, it's right back to the hold. The round ends and they actually shake hands while going back to their corners. No clipping here so it's straight to round five. They put their heads together and try to ram the other for a few moments until Finlay grabs a front facelock.

A hard whip across the ring has David in more trouble and Finlay puts him over his shoulder for a backbreaker submission hold. David won't give up because he's a good blue eye (British term for face) but Finlay clubs him down and pins him for the first fall. Apparently the sixth round automatically begins after the previous fall.

Finlay cranks on the arm but David falls on top of him in a slam attempt for two. Now it's David slamming Fit down as the fans get into it a little bit. A cross body out of nowhere is good for a pin on Finlay to tie things up. Due to the fall we automatically start round seven and it's Finlay tripping David down to the mat. David reverses to a chinlock before hitting his powerslam (impressive as he's TINY here) for one.

Finlay goes right back to the armbar before David kicks him in the chest to escape. They slug it out and a quick suplex gets two for David. Back to the leg hold by Fit but David reverses into a body scissors. Finlay pushes off the mat but can't break the hold, even as he's standing on his feet. He finally flips David down and grabs a standing arm hold, only to be backdropped down for two. Finlay does the same thing to him and the round ends with Finlay throwing David down.

Last round now and both guys are clearly tired. Finlay cranks on the arm again before they slug it out with forearms from their knees. David grabs a headlock and cranks on it so much that Finlay can't slam him for the break. A piledriver, the high spot of the match, gets two on Finlay but he comes right back with a suplex for the pin and the match.

Rating: C+. This is an entirely different kind of match and I would understand why most fans today would find this boring. That being said, it's actually entertaining when you get down to the style here. You had two guys working on each other's bodies for thirty seven minutes until any big move was going to beat the other. Well other than the piledriver but you get the idea. It's not my style of wrestling but it's definitely worth checking out if you're interested in something that is as pure as you're going to find.

Smith would head to Japan in 1983 and chase the NWA Junior Heavyweight Title. Here he is challenging Cobra for the belt on November 11, 1983.

NWA Junior Heavyweight Title: Davey Boy Smith vs. The Cobra

Smith is actually in a mask here to start but takes it off before the bell. He throws Cobra to the floor to start and slams the champion down onto the concrete. A suplex brings Cobra back inside before Smith LAUNCHES him back of the top with a press slam. They head back inside for the big match intros, as apparently that was all before the bell. Smith throws him into the corner to start but Cobra does the same thing to Davey. I think Bulldog is the heel here but it's not really clear.

A wristlock has Cobra in trouble again but Cobra does the Owen Hart flip out to escape. Smith does a modified version to take over again but Cobra grabs the wrist just a few seconds later. Cobra flips out of a monkey flip and dropkicks Smith down as we get clipped what seems to be WAY ahead to Cobra getting two off a backdrop. His knee is hurt but he's still able to avoid a Smith backsplash and score the pin off a running headbutt. I won't rate it due to the clipping but what we saw wasn't bad.

I have to cover something from Stampede so here's a tag match from the late 70s/early 80s.

Davey Boy Smith/David Schultz vs. Bad News Allen/Great Gama

Joined in progress (about ten minutes in according to commentary) as is the custom in Stampede with Gama kicking Smith down to the mat. Apparently Allen (Bad News Brown) won't tag in and has made Gama wrestle the whole match so far. That goes nowhere as Allen comes in to hammer away and nail a big backdrop. A backbreaker gets two and it's back to Gama for a knee to the ribs. Allen, looking much thinner here than he did in the WWF, nails a Russian legsweep for two.

We get the classic face makes the tag but the referee doesn't see it spot. Smith misses a dropkick and is sent right back into the heel corner. He finally dives between Gama's legs and makes the hot tag to David. Everything breaks down and the referee gets bumped. Allen hits Schultz with a foreign object and throws Smith to the floor, drawing in David's friends for the no contest.

Rating: D+. The clipping didn't help things here but it felt like your modern TV main event. That being said, it still wasn't all that interesting as the hot tag sequence only went on for a few moments before Allen and Gama dominated again. The fans were trying to get into it but they never had the chance to get going.

Smith and his partner the Dynamite Kid would head to the WWF in 1985. Here's a match of theirs from Wrestlemania Sunday on the syndicated All-American Wrestling from March 31, 1985.

British Bulldogs vs. Barry O/Rene Goulet

The announcer messes up Barry's name by calling him Bobby. Dynamite and Barry start us off and Dynamite uses the speed to escape whatever is thrown at him. Off to Davey and this must be near their debut. Jesse says he's never seen the Bulldogs before so you know it's early in their run. Back to Davey who hooks a crucifix for two. Off to Goulet and both guys get missile dropkicks from Dynamite. Goulet hits a clothesline to bring in Barry. Davey cleans house and the Bulldogs use their

stepping stone headbutt spot to pin Barry. BIG pop for the Bulldogs.

Rating: C+. Just a squash, but man the Bulldogs were great when they started out. They were pulling off stuff that had never been seen in America so everyone reacted to them very strongly. Dynamite was so far ahead of his time it's unreal. Can you imagine him against Jericho or Mysterio in 1996? It would have been incredible.

The Bulldogs would win the Tag Team Titles at Wrestlemania II. Here's a defense from MSG on July 12, 1986.

Tag Titles: British Bulldogs vs. Moondogs

MSG again. Rex and Spot for you Moondog aficionados here. Davey vs. Spot to start us off. Off to Dynamite who runs him over with ease so it's time for Rex (the original Smash in Demolition if you care). The Moondogs were uh...out there. Wristlock by the Kid but Rex overpowers him for a bit. Off to Davey now who gets caught in the wrong corner and it's off to Spot.

Slam gets two for Davey but some double teaming shifts momentum again. Rex gets a splash for two and the same off a neckbreaker. Gorilla and Hayes wonder why Smith isn't tagging, thinking Dynamite could be hurt. Could it be THE FREAKING MOONDOGS KICKING HIS FREAKING HEAD IN? Dynamite isn't paying attention so Spot drills him, cracking the commentators up for no apparent reason.

Rex keeps a front facelock on and we get the tag that the referee doesn't see. I love that bit. Spot comes in (sans tag which is the icing on the cake of that spot) and the Moondogs are dominating. Rex goes up but lands on knees. Both guys go for tags but only Spot comes in. Davey gets a cross body for two and that ends this offensive streak for him. He reverses a suplex and there's the tag finally.

Gorilla and Al are surprised that Dynamite is fine. Gee who would have guessed that a guy in a match was perfectly fine? Fist drop from the middle rope gets two and it all breaks down. Dynamite and Spot are legal here. A top rope cross body by the Kid gets the pin to retain in a quick finish.

Rating: C+. Basic formula match here with a surprisingly decent match out of the Moondogs who were only good once in awhile. Not a bad little match and for a house show tag title defense this was just fine. It's amazing how deep the division was at this point as we have heel jobber tag teams. Think about that in modern wrestling.

The Bulldogs beat the Dream Team for the belts at Wrestlemania II but since I posted that match yesterday, here's a rematch from SNME VII.

Tag Titles: Dream Team vs. British Bulldogs

To the shock of no one this is 2/3 falls. We start with Dynamite and Valentine. Oh yeah it's Valentine and Beefcake making up the Dream Team. Somehow this is a higher profile match for Beefcake than the main event of Starrcade 94. The Bulldogs are hard to tell apart but Davey is bigger if nothing else.

Not by much though. You can definitely see Dynamite in Benoit. Valentine can't decide if he wants to work on the arm or the knee. Your finishing move is the figure four. Use your blonde head buddy. Dynamite gives up in the figure four, making it two straight matches on SNME where the Bulldogs have tapped out.

We cut to the locker room where Gene says that Adonis might have a separated shoulder and we go to a replay showing how it likely happened.

After a commercial we have fall 2. This is more or less heel dominance even though they have as much of a chance of winning

here as X and I do. Davey gets the hot tag and dominates. I love that vertical suplex. The powerslam puts Valentine down and then Brutus comes in for the save.

He gets caught in a fireman's carry and after a tag, Dynamite jumps on top of his back and hits a super diving headbutt for the pin to tie us up. After a commercial we have Dynamite and Valentine. Dynamite's knee was hurt for the better part of a year as steroid abuse just went crazy. Adonis has a shattered elbow apparently. The heels are completely dominating here until we get a brawl as Davey makes the save after a high knee. With Dynamite on Valentine, Davey gets a fisherman's suplex for the pin.

Rating: B. Solid stuff here with the psychology of the knee working through the entire match and the great balance here. It was another win for the champions which is never bad. This worked pretty well though and it was four good workers so there we are. The Dream Team wouldn't mean much from this point forward.

The Bulldogs lost the belts to the Hart Foundation due to cheating referee Danny Davis. The screwjob sent the Bulldogs looking for revenge, including at Wrestlemania III.

Hart Foundation/Danny Davis vs. British Bulldogs/Tito Santana

Davis is a crooked referee that cost both the Bulldogs and Santana their titles. Apparently this is Davis' debut as a wrestler. Mary Hart (no relation) is on commentary along with Uecker here as well. Tito beats up Danny before the match before we get going with Bret and Santana. Jesse steals the Bulldogs' mascot Matilda as he leaves. Off to Davey vs. Anvil and Smith pulls him by the beard. That's a bit rough even for Neidhart.

Tito comes back in to work on the arm but gets sent to the heel corner for some high quality choking. That goes nowhere so here's Smith vs. Neidhart again. Jim takes him down with a

suplex but Bret misses a middle rope elbow. Dynamite comes in for the chest to buckle bump from Bret but Hart comes back with some punches. Tito tries to break up some interference but only allows even more cheating by Neidhart.

Jim hooks a modified camel clutch on Dynamite before it's back to Bret. I don't think we've seen Davis in yet but before I can finish that sentence he's in for a few stomps. That's the extent of his offense as it's already back to Bret for some actual skill. The sun is starting to go down so the arena looks dark now. Back to Danny for one kick before it's time for the Hitman again.

The Harts slingshot Davis right onto Dynamite's knees and it's off to Santana for the beating on Davis that the fans have been waiting for. Tito destroys Danny and hits the forearm but Neidhart breaks up the Figure Four. Off to Smith who rams Davis' head into Dynamite's. A jumping tombstone (not yet named) kills Davis even more but Smith doesn't want the cover. There's the delayed vertical followed by the powerslam but everything breaks down. Davis pops up and hits Smith with the megaphone for the pin in the melee.

Rating: C-. As fun as the beating Davis took was, the ending is really stupid as he popped up like nothing and was able to knock out a power guy with a single shot? The guy was a referee a few months ago but he's able to do that with one shot? Bad ending aside, this was fun stuff and the fans were WAY into it.

The Bulldogs would fall down the card soon after this but would still be in the first match ever at Summerslam 1988.

Fabulous Rougeaus vs. British Bulldogs

These two teams could not stand each other behind the scenes, eventually reaching the point where the Bulldogs left the company as a result. Davey jumps Jacques to start and rams him into turnbuckle after turnbuckle to put him down. Smith throws

Jacques over to Raymond for a tag in a nice display of bravado. Off to Dynamite for a quick headbutt and a slam to keep Raymond in trouble.

Off to an armbar by Dynamite Kid before Davey comes back in for one of his own. Dynamite comes back in with a wicked clothesline to take Raymond's head off. Chris Benoit idolized Dynamite and you can see so many of Benoit's moves when you watch Dynamite's matches. Davey comes in and trades some snappy rollups before it's back to Dynamite to continue cranking on the arm.

Davey comes in again but Jacques trips him up to shift control to the Canadians. It's off to some leg work now as Jacques kicks away at Davey's hamstring. The Rougeaus start tagging in and out with Ray coming in to drop some knees on the hamstring before Jacques comes back in to pull on the leg. Ray comes back in sans tag to pull on the leg before Jacques puts on a spinning toehold. Davey finally gets back up and monkey flips Ray down, allowing for the tag to Dynamite.

The Kid speeds things way up and sends Ray out to the floor, triggering a brawl between Davey and Raymond. Back inside and Davey hits the powerslam but Jacques breaks it up before a one count. Dynamite comes back in for the headbutt but Jacques drills him with a belly to back suplex for two. Off to an abdominal stretch by Jacques followed by a camel clutch from both Rougeaus. Kid fights up and rams Ray into the buckle to escape but it's right back to the abdominal stretch by Jacques.

Dynamite finally fights up again and headbutts Jacques down to bring in Davey. Jacques immediately grabs the rope to avoid a dropkick but gets caught in a gorilla press onto the top rope. Everything breaks down and Davey picks up Dynamite to launch him into a headbutt on Jacques, but the time limit expires before there can be a cover.

Rating: C+. This was a solid opener as the fans were staying hot throughout the extended rest holds. The parts with both teams brawling and getting to move around made for a much better match, but you can't do that for twenty minutes when you're going for the draw. Draws were much more commonplace back in the 80s so this was nothing that odd to see.

The aforementioned friction between the Rougeaus and the Bulldogs caused Smith and Dynamite to leave the company after Survivor Series 1988. Smith would return a few years later as a singles wrestler. One of his major feuds was with the Warlord, who he fought at Wrestlemania VII.

Davey Boy Smith vs. Warlord

This is about whether or not Davey can break the full nelson. We start with our standard power stuff as they ram into each other a few times, only to have Bulldog knock Warlord out to the floor. A crucifix doesn't work for Bulldog so Warlord drops some elbows for no cover. We hit the bearhug but Bulldog punches out, only to get caught in a hot shot to keep him on the mat.

A BIG belly to belly (kind of) puts Bulldog down but again Warlord won't cover. We hit the chinlock until Bulldog fights up and hits a dropkick to send Warlord into the corner. Punches in said corner can't drop Warlord but a cross body is finally enough to get him off his feet. Warlord counters a piledriver but Bulldog counters the counter into a sunset flip for two. Bulldog misses a charge into the corner and Warlord hooks the full nelson. It looks like all hope is lost but the fingers aren't locked. Bulldog finally flips out of it and hooks the powerslam out of nowhere for the win.

Rating: C+. This would be filed under the category of "shocking the world" as it was actually a pretty solid match. Bulldog would get a lot better all of a sudden while Warlord would fall further down the card than he already was. This was

way better than I was expecting and it turned into a pretty decent power match.

This brings us to the big one. Smith was named #1 contender to the Intercontinental Title and received his shot against his brother in law at Summerslam 1992. The match was in London at Wembley Stadium, making Bulldog the home country favorite. Here's that masterpiece.

Intercontinental Title: Bret Hart vs. Davey Boy Smith

Bulldog has British Commonwealth boxing champion Lennox Lewis leading him to the ring and carrying the Union Jack. The place comes unglued for Davey but Bret isn't booed at all, as his style is perfect for a crowd like this. Bulldog shoves him into the corner to start before hitting a hard shoulder to send the champion to the floor. Back in and they head to the mat with Bret grabbing a headlock to take over. Bret gets a few near falls off some rollups and it's right back to the headlock.

Back up again and Davey grabs a hammerlock but Bret hits a HARD elbow to the face to escape, drawing the ire of the fans. Davey takes him down with basic technique and cranks on the armbar. The hold stays on for a good while with the fans getting louder and louder the longer Smith has control. Bret finally sends him into the ropes to escape and drives a knee into Smith's ribs. The fans boo Hart out of the stadium for a basic move like a knee and boo even louder for a chinlock.

An atomic drop (called a reverse piledriver by Vince) puts Smith down and Bret blocks a crucifix (which worked earlier) in a Samoan Drop for two. Another chinlock is quickly broken but Davey charges into a boot in the corner to put him down again. A bulldog puts Bulldog down but he slams Bret off the top a second later. Davey misses a top rope splash and is sent to the outside, drawing a ton of heat for Bret.

The champion tries a dive to the floor but lands on Davey's

back, nearly breaking several bones in the process. Bret sends him into the post before heading back inside pounding away with European uppercuts. Hart hooks a chinlock for a good while before loading up the Five Moves of Doom. He pulls Bulldog up by the hair to show how evil he is and it's off to a sleeper. This stays on for a LONG time as well but Smith rams him into the corner to escape again.

They slug it out but Davey drops him out of a gorilla press into the ropes. Three straight clotheslines get two for Smith and a gorilla press gets the same. The delayed vertical and the chest first bump into the buckle get the same. Bulldog hits his powerslam finisher but Bret gets out at two, with far less of a reaction from the crowd than you would expect. Bret rolls through a suplex for two of his own, only to get superplexed down for a near fall.

Back up again and a double clothesline puts both guys down, giving the fans a needed breather. While laying on his back Bret hooks the Sharpshooter ala last year against Mr. Perfect, terrifying the fans. Smith gets the rope so Bret tries a suplex, but Davey drops to his knees and hooks both legs for the pin and the title. The place ERUPTS on the three count.

Rating: A+. This took awhile to get going but once those near falls started it turns into an instant classic. Davey had to win here and it was a perfectly clean pin in the middle of the ring. Bret, ever the critic, doesn't like this match and basically blames the whole thing on Smith for being spent five minutes in. Those of us in the real world see it for what it is: a masterpiece.

Davey would drop the title in November to Shawn Michaels before being released over human growth hormone issues. He was in WCW very soon thereafter and challenged Vader for the World Title at Slamboree 1993.

WCW World Title: Vader vs. Davey Boy Smith

Dude, Rule Britannia is copyrighted? Basically the idea is that Vader is unhurttable and everyone has been trying to find someone to stop him. He would beat Sting, Cactus, break the back of a jobber (literally) and more or less just rampage through the company. Then he fought this guy named Flair. Anyway they're just showing off power to start here so there isn't much to say.

Vader gets him in the corner and mauls him as he is known to do. Out to the floor and Vader pulls a Sting, crashing into the railing on a splash attempt. Smith gets a solid slam and the champ is in trouble. Davey even manages the DELAYED vertical on Vader. My jaw literally dropped at that one as he had him up there for like five or six seconds. Smith runs into a boot which does nothing as he slams Vader again.

Smith sends him to the floor and the crowd is actually getting into this. The fans of course chant Whoomp There It Is for some reason. Crucifix is countered into something like a Samoan Drop to put Davey down again. Vader Bomb hits a few moments later but Smith kicks out to a solid reaction.

Vader cranks it up and hits the thing where he jumps into you off the middle rope. Davey slams him off the top and gets a headbutt off the top but can't get anything going for more than a few seconds. Rollup gets two. Whenever Vader is in trouble he fires a big right hand to get out of it. Why mess with what works I suppose. Top rope splash gets no cover for the champion.

This match needs to end, like NOW. Vader throws on a chinlock and Smith scares me again by picking him up on his shoulders and dropping back. Someone got the GOOD steroids this week. Smith catches a charging Vader in something resembling the powerslam but Race breaks up the count. Race gets beaten up on the floor...and then Vader hits Smith with a chair for the ultra lame DQ.

Rating: D. This was ridiculously boring as no one cared. The power moves by Davey were great but at the same time that's not enough to carry a match. They did what they could but the clashes of styles just killed it. Vader needs a guy that can move around out there because Vader can sell quite well for them. Not the worst I've ever seen, but totally uninteresting especially with that ending.

The feud continued in this six man tag at Clash of the Champions #23.

Sting/Dustin Rhodes/British Bulldog vs. Sid Vicious/Rick Rude/Vader

Sid is managed by Colonel Robert Parker, a stereotypical rich southern man based on Elvis Presley's manager Colonel Tom Parker crossed with Colonel Sanders. Rude has a metal briefcase with him, containing his US Title. He never lost the belt in a match but was stripped due to injury. Dustin won the title in a tournament and defended against Rude but the match went to a draw so the title is vacant. Vader and Sid have given Bulldog and Sting an offer to retire to avoid facing the monsters at Beach Blast but the heroes don't seem interested.

Sting and Rude get things going and the fans are immediately into the match. A headlock has Rude in trouble but it's quickly into a top wristlock with neither guy being able to get the advantage. Rude drives him into the corner to escape a hammerlock and takes over with a back elbow to the face. Sting comes right back with a gorilla press but Vader and Sid catch Rude in mid air.

For some reason Dustin and Bulldog let Sting fight all three on his own before it's off to Dustin to hammer on Rude. Vader tries a save but splashes Rude by mistake. Bulldog comes in to face Sid in a battle of power with Sid being knocked to the apron. Sting gets in a cheap shot and Bulldog nails Sid with a big shoulder block. Dustin and Vader get tags and it's Rhodes

hammering the champion down in the corner. He lifts him up for a nice suplex and drops some elbows before a seated clothesline drops Vader again.

Dustin goes up top but misses an elbow, allowing Vader to take his head off with a clothesline of his own. The Vader Bomb gets two and it's back to Rude who works on the back. Rhodes blocks a suplex and drops Rude face first to the mat but it's right in front of Sid. Vicious comes in and works Dustin over in the corner. The nearly seven foot Sid takes Dustin down with a headlock takeover and nips up to get back to his feet.

The crowd isn't sure what to think until Vader comes in and destroys Dustin with rights and lefts. He goes to the middle rope but dives into a powerslam. Rude breaks up a tag attempt and tries a tombstone, only for Dustin to counter into one of his own. Everything breaks down and Sting takes Vader to the floor but misses the Splash against the barricade. Vader cracks Dustin in the head with the briefcase, allowing Rude to fall on top for the pin.

Rating: B. Really fun six man tag here with both teams looking great. The Dustin vs. Vader sequence was awesome and I'd love to see them fight in a regular match later on. This was another good example of putting a bunch of feuds together into one match and it almost never fails. The whole thing worked very well and the cheating makes more sense here than it did in the previous show's Tag Team Title match. This was a much more violent feud and had been a more violent match whereas the title match was a technical match and about the titles rather than the hatred.

Bulldog would come back to the WWF in 1994 and get a WWF Title shot against Bret Hart at In Your House #5.

WWF World Title: Bret Hart vs. British Bulldog

The much stronger Bulldog shoves the champion into the corner to start but Bret grabs an armbar to take over. Davey flips

around a lot but ultimately takes Bret down by the hair like a true villain should. Back to the armbar by Bret as we take a look at Cornette's tennis racket cover which looks like Santa Claus' face. Bret gets two off a cross body and goes right back to the arm. Smith comes back with another hair pull before tying Bret up in the Tree of Woe (hanging him upside down in the corner) to stomp away.

Off to the chinlock as the fans are solidly behind Bret. They soon get bored of cheering for him though and start chanting for the then upstart promotion ECW. Vince informs us that the Undertaker has challenged the winner of this match for the Royal Rumble. After a Cornette tennis racket shot we're in the third chinlock less than ten minutes into the match before the required chest first bump into the buckle gets two on Hart.

A backdrop puts Bret down for two more and we hit the chinlock again. At least this time he makes it a headlock as the fans chant USA, in theory for the Canadian champion. Bret comes back with a monkey flip and a bulldog to the Bulldog for two. A piledriver lays Smith out for two more but Bulldog crotches Bret on the ropes to break up a superplex. Bret falls to the floor and the fans want a table. Instead they get the champion being sent into the steps as Bulldog is in control.

Smith sends him hard into the barricade and Bret is busted wide open. Back in and Bulldog piledrives Bret down for a near fall before pounding at the cut on the forehead. The delayed vertical suplex gets the same and there's a gorilla press slam for good measure. Bulldog channels his former partner the Dynamite Kid with a headbutt to the back for two. Smith seems to have hurt his knee though so Bret tries a quick Sharpshooter, only to have Smith break it up just as easily.

A hard shoulder puts Bret onto the floor so Smith can try to get some feeling back into his knee. Bret counters a suplex back inside into a rollup for yet another near fall before a double clothesline puts both guys down. They're quickly back

up and a backdrop puts Smith on the floor. Bret is ticked off now and dives over the top to pound away on Smith even more. Davey will have none of that though and powerslams Bret down on the floor to suck the life out of the crowd.

The protective mats are peeled back but Bret blocks a suplex by crotching Davey on the barricade in a nice callback to earlier in the match. Bret clotheslines him off the barricade and heads back inside where a backbreaker gets two. Now the superplex connects for two and an O'Connor Roll gets the same. In a really sudden finish, Bulldog charges into a boot in the corner and Bret cradles him for the pin. The look on Diana's face makes the ending even better as it almost says "HOW DARE YOU KEEP THE TITLE!"

Rating: B-. This got WAY better in the end but the first ten minutes or so of this were pretty dreadful. Also the ending didn't do it any favors as I was expecting a callback to the Summerslam 1992 match but we didn't get anything close to it. Still though, good match and by far the best thing we've had on one of these shows in the last two shows.

The next year saw Davey head into the tag team scene along with brother in law Owen Hart. They would get a shot at the belts at In Your House #10.

Tag Titles: Owen Hart/British Bulldog vs. Smoking Gunns

The Gunns are defending and the challengers have no Cornette with them due to the beating he received earlier. We see Cornette in the back with attorney Clarence Mason having him sign something. Also I have no idea why Owen left ringside after the previous segment when his match was next. Billy walks behind Bart with his arm around Sunny which probably isn't a good sign. Sunny had a tradition of having a huge poster of her fall down from the ceiling but this time the challengers have painted a beard on it. Nice touch.

Clarence Mason comes to ringside, apparently replacing

Cornette for tonight. Owen hits a few cross bodies for two each on Billy before it's off to a headlock. A small package gets two more for Owen as JR is still playing the heel on commentary, ensuring Vince that the REAL Diesel and Razor are back. Remember that line because it becomes important in a few months.

Off to Bart vs. Davey with the Bulldog hitting a few dropkicks to take over before cranking his arm for a bit. Owen comes back in for a chop block as the target shifts to Bart's knee. Owen and Bulldog take turns working on the leg with Owen putting on a modified Indian deathlock. A Boston crab doesn't last long as Bart quickly makes the rope but Bulldog comes in for a vertical suplex to put him down again. Bulldog even throws in a front flip to show off his athleticism a bit.

Back to Owen for more leg work but his spinning toe hold is countered into a small package for two. Owen comes right back with an enziguri for two of his own but Billy finally interferes, pulling Bulldog out to the floor and sending him into the steps. Back in and Bart is able to make the tag off to Billy. The champions take over but Billy almost immediately tags back to Bart.

The Sidewinder connects but Mason distract the referee, allowing Owen to come in off the top with a shot to the back of Bart's head. Bulldog can only get two though and it's back to Billy who again only hits a few stomps before tagging out to the weakened Bart. Bart loads up a powerslam on the Bulldog but gets rammed into Billy who wasn't paying attention. Davey hits the real powerslam for the pin and the titles.

Rating: D+. The title change was the right idea but this was one of the longest eleven minute matches I've ever seen. Both teams were heels here so the fans didn't have anyone to cheer for and the Gunns were boring in the first place. It wasn't terrible but the match didn't do anything for me at all.

The team would hold the belts for months, during which both would make the finals of a tournament for the first European Title. From Raw in Germany on March 3, 1997.

European Title: Owen Hart vs. British Bulldog

They're tag champions but have been having a lot of problems lately. This is the finals of a tournament with the first title going to the winner. They go to the corner to start with no one having an advantage. They exchange wristlock counters and it's Davey with some very early control. He counters a monkey flip with a cartwheel and both guys nip up to a standoff.

They shake hands and things reset. Owen grabs the wrist and climbs the ropes but gets caught in a powerbomb. Davey catapults him to the floor and invites him back in. Rollup gets two for Owen but an armdrag puts him on the mat where Davey takes over with a headlock again. Owen tries the same wristlock counter as before but Davey drops him right on his back and arm to counter.

We take a break and come back with Davey working on the arm some more. Davey's old crucifix gets two. Delayed vertical is countered into an enziguri attempt which Davey ducks. There's a surfboard but Owen grabs the referee to escape. Bulldog speeds things up but Owen avoids him to toss him out to the floor. Davey is holding his knee but gets back in pretty easily.

Back in Owen tries a leapfrog but injures his own knee. He's channeling his inner Bret though and is goldbricking so he can get the advantage. Now they're ticked off and the Sharpshooter is broken up. Things speed up and Owen kicks his head off for no cover. Owen drops a leg for two and hooks a chinlock as they get a breath. Davey is knocked to the floor and a sunset flip back in gets two.

We take a second break and come back with Davey ramming elbows

into Owen's ribs but a belly to belly suplex stops him cold. Off to a camel clutch but Davey stands up and hits an electric chair to break the hold. Owen tries a Flair cover with his feet on the ropes for two. Middle rope elbow gets the same. This is already very good and is getting great. Up to the corner and Davey falls onto him to counter a superplex for two.

Davey comes back with clotheslines and the fans are getting into it. Suplex puts Owen down for two. Smith gorilla presses him but crotches him on the top. The Canadian grabs a German on the Englishman for two. Davey loads up the powerslam but Owen grabs the ropes to escape. There's the enziguri and Davey is down. He hooks the Sharpshooter but Bulldog makes the rope. Owen loads up a tombstone but Davey reverses into the Powerslam for two. The victory roll that Owen beat Bret with at Mania X is countered into a rollup of Davey's own for the pin.

Rating: A+. Just a total classic here as they countered each other perfectly the entire time and we got a great false finish with Owen kicking out of the powerslam. Do you ever remember that happening? This is easily one of the best matches you'll ever see, especially on free TV. Great stuff and probably their second best matches ever each.

Smith would hold the title for several months, eventually defending it in England against Shawn Michaels at One Night Only.

European Title: Shawn Michaels vs. British Bulldog

Now if you want to talk about a mixed reaction, Shawn gets a mixed reaction. I mean it's right down the middle. Davey of course gets the big old hero pop that you knew he would get. While it may seem obvious as to who is going to win here, this wasn't as in the bag as it appeared to be. Smith losing here would have caused about as big of a riot as Bret losing in

Montreal.

Smith is about as over here as Vince would be in a "Who's got the biggest ego contest". Shawn walks up the ramp for no apparent reason before coming back to the ring. Smith starts off by completely overpowering Shawn who again walks up the ramp. In a cool looking spot, with Shawn on the apron and looking away from the ring, Smith hooks him for a reverse suplex and just drops him back into the ring. It looks a lot better than it sounds.

Vince says he's surprised Shawn didn't break in half. Say that again in about four months Vinny. How many freaking big time matches have these guys had? They have the final SNME match, they have KOTR 97 and now this. That's a lot for a series of big matches when you think about it, especially over that long of a stretch of time. Bulldog is ridiculously popular and is dominating.

Apparently he's dropped about 20 pounds or so, which is about 2 stones. Vince says Shawn is in his prime. I don't know about that, but it's close enough. As Bulldog beats on him for a good while, here's Rick Rude, who was the insurance policy for Shawn in what would form into DX. They had been hanging out lately but nothing concrete had happened yet.

We hit the sleeper now to kill off a bit of time which is fine by me. Lawler says not to adjust the TV. Who does that? I mean really, have you ever adjusted your TV? I certainly haven't. The pace slows a lot with Shawn working on the arm, which means you know what's coming. Yep, there it is, as Smith shows incredible power and picks up Shawn while he's in an arm lock.

Here's HHH and Chyna as I wonder WHERE ARE THE FREAKING HARTS??? Shawn starts his finishing sequence and goes for Chin Music in the corner of all places but Smith counters into the powerslam. Rude grabs the foot and we hit the floor where the kick connects. Rude and HHH beat on him as somehow the referee

sees none of this which is just completely ridiculous but whatever.

HHH even hits the Pedigree on the floor. Apparently Davey is wearing a knee brace for a bad knee which hasn't been mentioned until just now. Well alright then. HHH and Chyna help Shawn and pull him about 6 inches. Seriously, how can the referee not freaking notice this??? Now Rude interferes again as this is beyond stupid now. Oh apparently Bulldog slipped off the platform that the ring is on and hurt his knee.

Well that's something I guess. The referee stops the match to give Shawn the title and the Grand Slam. There are rumors that Smith was supposed to win but Shawn and HHH played politics to get the win as close to two days before this show. Somehow, I could completely buy that. There was zero need for Shawn to win here, especially in a show never mentioned on American television.

I really don't...oh you have got to be screwing with me. Shawn puts the hold back on and Smith's wife gets in to help but is picked off by Chyna and BRET AND OWEN HART RUN IN FOR THE SAVE. WHERE IN THE HOLY FREAKING GOODNESS WERE THEY FIFTEEN FREAKING MINUTES AGO??? COME ON VINCE WILL YOU THINK ONCE IN YOUR MISERABLE LIFE??? THAT MAKES NO SENSE!

If they're going to run in for the save NOW why not do it when there were three people cheating to help Shawn? DX poses forever to end this. Yeah, after that stupidity, I'd totally buy the HHH and Shawn politics thing.

Rating: B-. The ending here is just so stupid that it makes my head spin, which makes me really think Shawn and HHH had something to do with it. Honestly, what did Shawn gain here? Does anyone remember anything about his European title reign that had to do with him defending the belt? I certainly don't.

Actually, I remember him losing it on the Christmas show to HHH after Slaughter made them fight because he hadn't defended

it in over two months. What in the world was the point of him getting it here other than to help his own ego? That makes zero sense. Other than that bringing this match WAY down and the Harts looking like idiots, this was a kind of slow match and overly long with the interference sucking the life out of it at the end. It's not bad, but not great at all.

Smith would bail to WCW after Montreal but that run was so horrible that we'll pick things up at Unforgiven 1999 when Smith came back as a heel and was put in a six pack challenge for the WWF Title.

WWF Title: HHH vs. British Bulldog vs. Rock vs. Big Show vs. Mankind vs. Kane

Remember this is two in the ring and tagging in and out with Austin as guest referee. Oh ok Austin is enforcer and Korderas is the regular referee. That helps a bit. Entrances of course take a LONG time as you would expect them to here. Kane is rocking the mainly black outfit with red mixed in. Always loved that. So Chyna is a face on her own and a heel here. Ok then. She turned more than Team 3D does now if that tells you anything.

Rock gets a nice pop but not epic like he would get after Austin left. He's walking a lot slower than he usually does too. That's just odd. THERE'S your big pop for Austin. That's more like it. The crowd is alive at least. Ross gets a solid shot at WCW by saying he's never heard an ovation like this in Charlotte for any athlete. Austin does commentary. Rock and Bulldog start us off. Thankfully Smith is wearing long tights here.

It's weird hearing Austin cursing every other word in today's wrestling environment. It's Kane and HHH here as I'm not going to try to keep up with all the tags here. I like the tagging ideas here as we don't have to deal with the massive chaos. That's just annoying otherwise. Austin wants to finish his six

pack before the Six Pack match ends. They're starting slow here which is fine as they have a good deal of time, over twenty minutes, to work with.

Austin is so freaking entertaining it's scary. He wants to know where you mail the paychecks to a guy in Parts Unknown. That's a very good question. How do you get a flight there? We get Kane vs. Big Show which is an epic rivalry. I mean think of how long those two have feuded for.

And we're back to the beginning pairing as we have Bulldog vs. Rock. Solid stuff so far and having Austin on commentary is helping. He would be leaving in a few months to have neck surgery so I'm guessing he's on commentary to give him time off. Smart if nothing else.

How weird is it to think that Austin wouldn't have the world title for over a year and a half from this point? As great as he was, he didn't hold the title for like 20 months in the Attitude Era. That's often forgotten. Foley and HHH are in the aisle and there goes Rock with them. Ross calls a low blow on HHH a unique form of birth control. Considering Stephanie was just announced as pregnant again, that's rather funny.

Naturally they're all on the floor now. SICK Texas Piledriver on the stairs to HHH from Mankind. That sounded AWFUL. This has been really good so far in case you were wondering. Foley tags Rock in so he can have a chance to win the title. Foley's character was so far ahead of everyone else's no one could see him. And the referees cross their picket lines to complain about Korderas crossing the picket lines. This is freaking stupid. Rock beats up Big Show as some things never change.

Rock steals Austin's beer to a BIG pop. Odd. Foley is up from a Kane tombstone in like 8 seconds. Not good Mick. It's finishers a go-go here as it's a mess that you knew it would come down to. Mandible Claw to Rock which gets Austin fired up. Show goes off and just beats the heck out of everyone. He

chokeslams Foley and the other referees pull out Korderas. Dang it how stupid can you freaking get??? Austin takes over as referee.

Thankfully he beats up the referees as he should since they're freaking morons. It's Rock and HHH in the ring and Rock goes for the People's Elbow which gets two as Show pulls Austin out and Rock takes a chair shot. HHH gets a Pedigree on Rock 10 seconds after the Rock Bottom and Elbow for the title. Ok then. At least Foley isn't the only one not selling today. Austin beats him up and beers all around ends it.

Rating: B+. Solid stuff here. I really liked it as they gave them time and it never felt like it was out of control or anything like that which is a very nice touch. Other than Taker or Austin you couldn't ask for a bigger lineup either. This was a solid and very entertaining match that didn't feel anywhere near like the twenty minutes it got which is a very good sign. Very fun and solid match which works very well to close the show.

We'll wrap it up with one more title win. From Insurrextion 2000 in England.

Hardcore Title: British Bulldog vs. Crash Holly

To say the crowd erupted is an understatement. Crash chokes him to insane booing. This is by far the biggest reaction that Crash has ever gotten. Bulldog is just destroying him here as you would expect. Crash has a kendo stick broken over his back. The Powerslam gets the title. This was REALLY short.

Smith was one of those guys that kind of hit his ceiling and there's nothing wrong with that. He had a lot going for him and would have been champion in the world of two titles, but he was never quite good enough to be the top guy in the organization. The prime of his career was one heck of a run though and he's pretty easily the most famous wrestler to come out of Europe because of that time among other things.

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