

# Wrestler of the Day – October 11: Lanny Poffo

Today is someone a lot smarter than you: Lanny Poffo.

Poffo got started in 1975 after being trained by his father Angelo. We'll look at a match from the All Star Championship Wrestling promotion out of Knoxville in 1979.

## Lanny Poffo vs. George McCrary

Poffo is billed as being from Amarillo, Texas here. This is VERY old school with bad lighting and maybe fifty people in the audience. Poffo flips out of a chinlock and cranks on the arm as the lighting get so bad that I can barely see what's going on. Some headlocks put George back on the mat and Poffo cranks on a kind of abdominal stretch. George drops a knee but Lanny hammers away with right hands and a short arm scissors.

Back up and Lanny jumps without doing anything else but it's enough to send George running into the corner. Another knee to the face has Poffo in trouble but McCrary misses an elbow drop. Lanny slams him down for a slingshot splash for two before a bad looking dropkick puts George down. Back up and a quick sleeper gives Poffo the win.

**Rating:** D. Time has not been kind to the match or the film it was shot on. The match wasn't the best but Poffo was still way ahead of anyone else out there at this point. He still needed some polishing as there were some botches in there, but for 1979 in Tennessee this was insane stuff.

The Poffos, including brother Randy, would start up International Championship Wrestling around Kentucky and Indiana. Here's a match from their promotion in 1980.

## Lanny Poffo vs. Rick Zarda

They actually shake hands to start and Zarda grabs a quick headlock. Poffo gets slammed a few times before a big dropkick puts Zarda down. A

slingshot splash out of the corner gives Lanny a quick pin.

Off to the WWF now and we'll start things off on July 13, 1985.

### Terry Funk vs. Lanny Poffo

At the Garden here. Dang Terry Funk vs. Randy Poffo sounds awesome beyond belief for the promos alone if nothing else. I think they did some stuff in Memphis. Funk stalls to start. He chases a ring attendant who filed a legit lawsuit over something with the company at some point and it was a big deal. Sweet goodness that was vague but it's all I've got.

Funk is considered a great here which is just weird to hear as he's a legend now rather than simply an all time great. Red hot crowd here. Poffo does a standing backflip which is insane in its own right. He was so far ahead of his time it's unreal. Based on what I can find this is July 12, 1985 if you're interested. Terry sees Lanny prancing around and you know he's not a fan of it.

The brawling vs. speed/agility stuff here is actually working. Funk gets a sweet leverage move to send him over the top. His wrestling ability was and always will be underrated. He shouts PIG at Poffo. As long as he doesn't want to make him squeal like one I think were' ok. Funk gets sent to the floor off an awesome atomic drop. Funk pounds away but falls to the floor again for some reason.

Terry suplexes him to the floor and Lanny is more or less dead. This guy took some of the best beatings I can ever remember. He looks a bit like a short haired version of Gorgeous Jimmy Garvin although he has, you know, talent. The crowd is getting into this and I can't blame them as this has been solid. Funk shoves the referee before hitting a nice reverse neckbreaker for two.

SWEET sunset flip by Poffo for two but they mess up and ring the bell anyway. Poffo takes over and does some sweet fast

paced stuff. He busts out a freaking moonsault which was INSANE in 85. Funk goes back to that old left hand again but gets caught in a hurricanrana of all things for two. And then Funk throws on a choke/sleeper for the submission/cure for insomnia.

**Rating:** B. This was REALLY good and I never would have guessed that. Poffo got a chance to throw out his insane offense which blew people away back then. Funk was his usual old hateful self and the whole thing just worked really well. Solid match here and a really nice surprise the whole way around.

Poffo would somehow get a Tag Team Title shot on the second SNME.

Tag Titles: Tony Garea/Lanny Poffo vs. Dream Team

Beefcake and Valentine in case you're a young gun. This is the standard dominating first title defense on SNME where there was no chance of the titles changing hands. Only once did a title ever switch on this show and it wasn't until 1989 when the Brain Busters beat Demolition in a shocker. Poffo, more famous as the Genius, busts out a moonsault which is a huge spot back in the day. I think he debuted it in the company but I'm not sure.

Poffo was a jobber to the stars and Garea used to be a tag champion way back in the day. The crowd is kind of dead here as this has been a long show but then again there was rarely anything of note at the end of these shows. I usually can't stand the ads everywhere but I really want a Coke given that sign up there. The US Express, the former champions, are in the front row. Figure Four ends this glorified squash.

**Rating:** D. Nothing at all of note here but to say they weren't shooting for a classic is an understatement. This was short and relatively painless as it's only about three and a half minutes long. Nothing terrible here but boring for the most part. I still don't get how two random guys can be the #1 contenders like this.

From June 14, 1986.

#### Harley Race vs. Lanny Poffo

Race is the “newcomer” here, although they openly say he’s wrestled for twenty years. Clipped to Poffo taking something like a brainbuster on the floor. The fans are quiet but this is the old Race, as in the old school style of him. Top rope headbutt (which Race is credited with inventing) puts Poffo down and a regular one puts him on the floor. Poffo starts his comeback and hits a flying headscissors to bring Race over the top and back in. Race gets him in a fireman’s carry and drops him throat first across the top rope to break up the comeback though. Fisherman’s suplex ends this. Not enough to grade but Race was his usual great self, even though the match was dull.

Back to Saturdays with SNME VII.

#### Kamala vs. Lanny Poffo

Ok what are you expecting with three minutes left in the show? It’s a total 80s squash, making it AWESOME.

**Rating:** B+. All for being quick and Kamala scaring the heck out of me back in the day.

Time for some Superstars matches, starting on February 14, 1987.

#### Bob Orton/Don Muraco vs. Leo Strohlein/Lanny Poffo

Poffo has a poem, where he talks about Andre for no apparent reason. He even swears a bit. Ok then. He gets a pop if nothing else. Jesse talks about his face being insured by Lloyd’s of London. And now let’s hear from Hillbilly Jim, who talks about Hogan vs. Andre. Ok then. A move that we would call the Tombstone ends it. No attention was paid to this at all.

**Rating:** N/A. Just a squash here to get the heels to look good. Nothing over a minute and a half at best.

And on February 28.

Brutus Beefcake/Greg Valentine/Adrian Adonis vs. Rick Martel/Tom Zenk/Lanny Poffo

The heels have Johnny V, Jimmy Hart and Dino Bravo with them. Poffo does a REALLY bad poem. This is actually a big time main event for this show. Adrian isn't afraid of Piper. They go back and forth here with like seven minutes left in the show. Wow this is actually getting some time.

It's not very good, but it's such a rarity on this show that I can't complain a bit. Adrian gets a pair of scissors and accidentally cuts Beefcake's hair. It makes sense in context. In his shock, Beefcake gets rolled up for the pin. Oddly enough the "replay" is comprised of just still shots.

**Rating:** D. Not a great match by any stretch, but it set up Adonis getting his hair cut at Mania. Having this stuff, that makes sense all of a sudden.

And one more on March 21, 1987.

Lanny Poffo vs. Honky Tonk Man

Poffo was more or less the Santino of this time, as he would win a match every now and then but was mostly a comedy character. It's about a minute long with a few quick shots but the Shake Rattle and Roll ends it.

**Rating:** N/A. Poffo's offense was WAY ahead of its time in America if nothing else as he even had a moonsault back then, which was unheard of in WWF.

One more TV match from Wrestling Challenge, September 13, 1987.

Lanny Poffo vs. Ted DiBiase

DiBiase doesn't like the poem (he was called a Million Dollar Jerk) and charges at Poffo, only to get dropkicked out to the floor. Back in and

Poffo goes face first into the buckle and dropped by a knee to the ribs. Ted drops some elbows for two but pulls Poffo up. Instead he put on a spinning toe hold for a quick submission.

Here he is at Wrestlefest 1988.

#### Jim Neidhart vs. Lanny Poffo

This was when Poffo was still a leaper and threw out Frisbees with his poetry on them. He was the king of jobbers at this point though so if nothing else he's not bad. I think his brother would be up next. He uses a moonsault which misses but was a big spot back then as he was the first WWF guy to use it I believe. I think Jim is a heel here but it's not entirely clear. The crowd is totally dead here. After just beating the tar out of Poffo a powerslam ends it.

**Rating:** N/A. Total squash here. I think they were toying with splitting up the Harts but that wouldn't happen for nearly three more years, resulting in Bret breaking out on his own and then Neidhart kind of fading away, although doing so in a positive way. Thank goodness they picked Bret to push instead of Neidhart.

Poffo would be repackaged as the Genius and put with Mr. Perfect. Here he is in a big match at SNME XXIV.

#### WWF Title: Hulk Hogan vs. The Genius

Genius kind of prances around and this is definitely going to be a comedy match. He even uses a nip up which just wasn't done back then. All Hogan here and Genius stops to write something on his scroll. He was incredibly athletic and skins the cat to get back in. And then Genius slaps Hogan in the face. Hogan gets tired of Genius doing his stuff and takes his head off with a clothesline.

Hogan is killing him now and then prances around the ring.

Like him or not, the guy knew how to play to a crowd like no one else in history could. And here's Mr. Perfect to mess everything up. He looks at the belt and says it's not perfect and puts gum on it. Hogan gets posted and back in the ring a moonsault gets two. He Hulks Up and Genius goes to the floor. Perfect clocks Hogan with the belt and GENIUS WINS! THE GENIUS BEAT HOGAN! WITH THE TITLE ON THE LINE! Perfect runs away with the title in hand.

**Rating:** B-. Total comedy match that set up Hogan vs. Perfect for a few months if nothing else. This wasn't supposed to be a serious match and you flat out can't grade it as one. This was a hilarious match at times as someone for once tried to outsmart Hogan and it worked like a charm. This was perfectly played and while the match was nothing, the comedy and thinking was great. I liked this a lot but most people wouldn't.

Time to fight Hogan's buddy at Royal Rumble 1990.

#### The Genius vs. Brutus Beefcake

If you're not familiar with Genius, think Damien Sandow if he read WWF themed poetry. Oh and he's a jobber. And Macho Man's real life brother. Genius offers a left-handed handshake but Brutus isn't interested. Jesse gets on Tony about Genius beating Hogan via countout on SNME. Tony: "Well...." Jesse: "WHO WON THE MATCH???" Genius heads to the floor for a cartwheel and we finally get the first lockup.

We get a clean break and Beefcake tells Genius what he can kiss. They lock up again and Genius goes to the eyes to get the first advantage. Beefcake comes out with an atomic drop and Genius gets to do his way overdone selling. I miss that. Back in and Genius fires off some shockingly good punches so Brutus comes back with an even bigger punch. Expect to hear the word punch a lot in this match.

Beefcake steps on Genius' fingers like a total jerk and crotches Genius on the top rope. Half of Beefcake's taunts would get him fired today for suggesting that Genius is effeminate. We go back to the standard story of

the match: Genius gets in some strikes, Brutus hits him once to take over again. A dropkick gets two for Genius as does a rollup, but Brutus catches him coming off the middle rope with a punch to the ribs.

There's the sleeper but Genius quickly escapes. Another sleeper attempt is quickly countered, but the Genius is knocked into the referee. Ref bumps weren't cliched back in the 80s, so this is kind of a big development. Anyway the sleeper goes on again and Genius is going down quickly. Brutus puts him out and starts cutting his hair, but Genius' buddy Mr. Perfect comes out for the save and the DQ.

**Rating:** D. This is one of those matches that was bad but it was energetic. For as much of a mess as Brutus would become in real life, the guy could get the fans fired up. That's pretty impressive as he was almost all punching and a sleeper. This was pretty lame stuff but the fans loved it which is the right idea.

Here's a big tag match from SNME XXV.

Genius/Mr. Perfect vs. Hulk Hogan/Ultimate Warrior

We get a shot of Warrior and Hogan colliding at the Rumble which indeed was an epic moment. Tony Schiavone talking about WWF wrestling is still odd as all all goodness. Heenan was at ringside here for no apparent reason. Never noticed that before. Warrior and Hogan say exactly what you would expect them to say before the match.

Perfect and Hogan start us out and Jesse breaks this down and compares it to the Super Bowl which makes a bit of sense. It's all faces as you would expect at this point. Perfect always was a great bumper. Hogan starts beating the tar out of Perfect and Genius is writing a poem. Ok then.

Perfect gets the scroll and you know what's coming. Hogan takes it in the head to take control for the heels. More or less this is Hogan getting beaten up by Perfect while Genius won't stay in for more than 30 seconds.



He's a gay character that they never said was gay. Perfect gets the Perfectplex and lets him up at two so Genius can get the pin. You know what's coming next. Warrior cleans house and gets the press slam on Genius as Hogan tags himself in.

He messes up the leg drop as he uses the far leg over the throat, so it looked like Kofi's Boom Drop. It gets the pin anyway though. Warrior beats up both heels but hits Hogan by mistake. The major showdown happens and we have Mania 6.

**Rating:** C-. Not great at all but it could have been far worse. This was all to set up the main event of Mania and that worked fine. Hogan and Perfect feuded a ton on the house show circuit but they never had the big match that they should have. Those Hogan/Warrior showdowns were amazing though.

One more big match before Genius became a manager. From February 19, 1990.

#### Hulk Hogan/Brutus Beefcake vs. The Genius/Mr. Perfect

Ok so at least we're at the final of the tape. Naturally Hogan is world champion here but the Warrior was coming. MSG again here, likely the same show as it's been all tape. The heels jump them as they come in. Heenan and Gorilla are on commentary here so we should get some funny lines.

Beefcake had cut Genius' hair recently so his head is a comedy point. Hogan vs. Perfect to start us off. Heel shenanigans give Perfect the advantage but the powers of Hulkamania switches that around a bit. Off to Beefcake who beats up both guys with ease. Headknocker to Perfect and a right hand get two. The champion comes back in and the beating continues.

Lot of quick tags from Hogan and Beefcake. High knee gets two for Beefcake. It's weird to see Perfect get beaten down this much. Perfect may be bleeding from the nose. Finally Perfect gets a shot from the scroll to the head of Hogan and Hulk is in trouble. Genius comes in and prances around a lot. The

moonsault gets knees though and Hogan gets the tag.

Brutus hammers away on Perfect and gets the Sleeper. Hogan runs interference but when Hebener is trying to get him out of the ring Genius gets a shot with the scroll and runs away. Ah there he is again. Old school tag team tactics where the referee misses the hot tag are still awesome.

Genius and Perfect hammer away on Brutus with Genius getting in Hogan's face. Perfectplex gets two since Hogan makes the save. Genius tries to make the stop but here's Hogan. I think you know the drill as it's Hogan in the 80s in MSG in the main event. What do you think is going to happen here? Genius is the victim if you're curious. More hair is cut post match.

**Rating:** C-. Not much here but it would have been fine as the main event of a house show. Hogan vs. Perfect was a big and long running feud on the house show circuit at this time and would continue once Hogan lost the title. Nothing too bad here but it's nothing that was unpredictable at all. Decent enough though.

Poffo is a guy who is overlooked because of his brother and that's kind of a shame. Between the poetry and the outfits and wearing a suit of armor for a string of battle royals back in the 80s (seriously), the guy would try different stuff and get it over. Look at the intellectual version of Damien Sandow for a modern comparison. Don't you just want to punch him in the face? That's a good quality to have and the ability to do a moonsault didn't hurt either.

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