

Wrestling Challenge – September 6, 1986 (Debut Episode): That's So 80s

Wrestling Challenge

Date: September 6, 1986

Location: Civic Center, Hartford, Connecticut

Commentators: Gorilla Monsoon, Ernie Ladd, Johnny V

It's the debut episode so this is kind of a big one. This is one of those shows that is right up my alley as it is actually a standard show rather than a collection of house show matches. In short, Wrestling Challenge (the new form of All Star Wrestling) debuted at the same time as Superstars (the new form of Championship Wrestling), as the WWF takeover continues. Since there are 23 episodes on Peacock, we might as well have some fun. Let's get to it.

Commentary welcomes us to the show. Well Gorilla does, as the other two don't say anything.

Opening sequence. Dang that's a lot of Hogan.

Here's who you'll see on the show.

US Express vs. Don Muraco/Iron Mike Sharpe

That would be Mike Rotundo/Dan Spivey, the lesser version of the team. Fuji is here with the villains and Lord Alfred Hayes is the ring announcer for some reason. Muraco stalls in the corner to start before grabbing a headlock as we get an inset promo from Billy Graham of all people, talking about facing the elements. He's on his way back to the boogaloo on the scene, event as Spivey comes in for a slam into some armdrags on Muraco.

It's off to Sharpe to send Spivey into the corner but a bad

backdrop and not great dropkick put Sharp down. Rotundo airplane spines Sharpe and everything breaks down. A small package has Sharpe in trouble but Muraco turns it over, only to have Spivey turn it over so Rotundo can get the pin at 3:05.

Rating: C-. So that's the first match in the history of Wrestling Challenge and it was as basic as you could get. The Spivey version of the US Express wasn't very good and that was on full display here. They're fine for a midcard team but you would think the WWF might want to start things off a bit hotter than this. The ending was good though.

We get a Wrestler's Rebuttal from Randy Savage, who doesn't like fans cheering for Elizabeth so much. They should be cheering for him instead, so GET ON THE BANDWAGON! Savage could make milk and cookies intense.

Adrian Adonis vs. Tommy Sharp

Adonis has Jimmy Hart and Bob Orton with him. Adonis rolls around to start and takes Sharp down, with Johnny V saying "Iwo Jima, out of ammo". Monsoon says Adonis chewing gum during the match is dangerous before we get an inset promo from Orton, who says the money and working conditions are better under Adonis than Roddy Piper. He's even starting to like the smell of the flowers!

Adonis works on the arm and sends Sharp outside for daring to try his own armbar. Hart offers a distraction so Orton can come in with a belly to back suplex/top rope clothesline combination to give Adonis the pin at 2:57. Commentary makes sure to point out that referee Danny Davis was more than a bit off with Hart's interference. That was a big finish for a match that didn't even last three minutes.

Bob Orton talks about how much better an offer he received from Adrian Adonis and Jimmy Hart. Roddy Piper went off to Hollywood and stopped sending him the checks so their contract

was off. Yeah he wears a pink hat and he is well paid to do so. Orton stood behind Piper so he could say everything he wanted and now he'll stand behind Adonis as well.

Koko B. Ware vs. Bob Bradley

Ware has been around for all of a few weeks at this point at most (he doesn't even have Frankie yet). Dancing ensues on the way to the ring as Johnny V thinks Koko sounds like a breakfast cereal. We get an inset promo from Ware, complete with a mini boom box on his shoulder, where he says he wants everyone in the WWF to do the Bird. Feeling out process to start with Bradley grabbing a headlock but Koko is back up with a running crossbody. Bradley slugs away as commentary is a bit split over the idea of the match's female referee. Koko elbows him in the face and hits a pair of dropkicks. A middle rope dropkick and a splash finishes Bradley at 3:03.

Rating: C-. You can see the skill in Koko but he needs to polish things up a bit. There are some things that can change him up enough and that will make things work. Ware can do the fast paced style and that is always going to get over, with the dancing making it even better. This wasn't the best match though as Bradley got in a bit too much offense, especially with Ware being a newcomer.

Jimmy Hart says he needs a lot of bodyguards, which is why he hired Bob Orton. Oh and Adrian Adonis will be the next World Champion.

Paul Orndorff vs. Troy Martin

Orndorff has Bobby Heenan with him and comes out to Real American in an angle I would love to see used again. He even throws in the hand to the ear for a nice bonus. We get an inset interview from Honky Tonk Man, who doesn't like Orndorff stealing from HIS FRIEND Hulk Hogan. Honky Tonk Man promises to get Orndorff somewhere as Martin is sent over the barricade. Back in and Orndorff hits him in the face before

walking around a bit. The piledriver finishes Martin at 1:44. He would do a bit better when he changed his name to Shane Douglas (or Troy Orndorff, when he was billed as Paul's nephew).

And now, the first ever Snake Pit, featuring Jake Roberts promising to bring us thunder. That would be in the form of Kamala, with the Wizard (King Curtis Iaukea) and handler Kim Chee. The Wizard brought Kamala 22,000 miles to unleash evil here. One day the Wizard was in the VIP lounge in Singapore (this isn't where I was expecting it to go) and the Sultan of Brunei wanted Kamala to wreck people. That was a weird way to go but at least they had Iaukea's creepy voice.

We go to a clip (which had aired before) of Harley Race being crowned King of the WWE. Bobby Heenan reading the proclamation. Race comes to the ring with Lord Littlebrook carrying his crown as the ring is full of various villains. Heenan officially crowns him the King and the fans are so incensed that they hold up signs that say BOO. The LONG LIVE THE KING chants are on (at least from Heenan) and Race is taken out on King Kong Bundy and Big John Studd's shoulders. Well that was awesome in a rather 1986 way.

We see a clip of Lou Albano's new team (yeah I'm shocked too): THE MACHINES! That was so stupid that it was hilarious.

British Bulldogs vs. Moondogs

Non-title and Lou Albano (he gets around) is here with the Bulldogs. The Moondogs jumps them before the bell and the fight starts fast. That's fine with the Bulldogs who send the Moondogs into each other. We settle down to Spot tripping Dynamite from the floor before coming in for a suplex and a near fall.

Rex comes in and elbows Dynamite in the face but a sunset flip and crossbody get Dynamite out of trouble. Well for all of three seconds or so as the Moondogs take him back into the

corner to keep up the beating. A clothesline drops Spot though and the hot tag brings in Davey to clean house. The suplex gets one on Spot as everything breaks down. The Moondogs double team Dynamite but Davey comes in off a blind tag for a high crossbody and the pin at 4:21.

Rating: C. Can we call it a dog fight? Anyway, the Bulldogs were a step ahead of just about everyone else and the Moondogs were little more than a quick opponent for them to fight off. It wasn't even a title match so how much of a threat was this going to be? The Moondogs don't get the attention that they deserve as they were rather decent as an oddball team and stayed around for a rather long time.

Jake Roberts, fresh off DDTing Ricky Steamboat on the concrete floor on Saturday Night's Main Event, isn't worried about the calls to ban the DDT. The DDT is cruel but fair and Roberts walks the way he wants to. He'll drop you so fast that your whole family will feel it. Randy Savage comes in as Roberts says everyone has rainbows to look at. Savage: "I've seen rainbows before." They march to their own beat because they're their own men. Yep, that's a scary team.

Here's what's coming next week.

We get a musical review (Gorilla's words) of this week's action, meaning a quick highlight package.

Overall Rating: C. This is about as fun of a show as I could ask for and that was the case this week. It is such an 80s show, but it is a little weird to not have Hogan around in some way. For now though, we got a nice mixture of squashed and interviews, which is a nice way to spend about 45 minutes. This is about the fun instead of the quality, and I'm certainly good for twenty two more shows.

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