

HIDDEN GEM: Two Of The Great Ones

I guess this will do if you're in for a dream match for the NWA World Title.

NWA World Title: Harley Race vs. Jack Brisco

Date: August 12, 1978

Location: Bayfront Center, St. Petersburg, Florida

Well if you insist. Race is defending and this is from Championship Wrestling From Florida. We're going to have a lot of clipping here and don't actually hear the opening bell. Race bails into the corner but Brisco hammers away and throws him over the top, which is usually a DQ in the NWA but doesn't seem to be the case here. The ring announcer reminds us that this is No DQ so there's your answer.

Back in and Race hits a headbutt to set up a front facelock to slow things down. We're clipped to Brisco fighting up but Race drives him down again. We're clipped again to Race still working on the same hold and even hanging on as Brisco grabs a fireman's carry. The camera stays on the referee for some reason until Brisco punches the leg to escape.

Race is down and we're clipped to Brisco yelling at the referee and hammering away at Race in the corner. The Figure Four goes on and we get the four minute call (it's a 60 minute time limit and we've barely seen six minutes so that is some serious clipping) but Race turns it over. Brisco turns over (with Race still facing down) and kicks him in the ribs with three minutes left.

A belly to back suplex drops Race for a second, followed by a collision for a double knockdown (with Race doing the slow motion fall). Race goes up top with two minutes left but gets slammed down. Brisco hits a dropkick and grabs the Figure Four

with a minute left but Race is in the ropes in a hurry. A backbreaker gives Brisco two and he grabs a rollup as time expires at about 10:00 shown of 60:00. Way too much clipping to rate but there is a reason that these people are as revered as they are. You could see the great match in there and the ending had some drama. Watch as much of these two as you can find.

NWA San Francisco TV – July 1, 1979: I Think There's Something Wrong With Him

San Francisco TV

Date: July 1, 1978

Location: KXTV Studios, Sacramento, California

Commentator: Hank Renner

I had a good time with the previous show and I'm assuming this is the followup. I'm guessing we won't be seeing Piper or Race here as it was rare to see the same lineup week after week. It was a nice way to keep things fresh and you never knew who you were going to see on a week to week basis. Let's get to it.

Just like last time, the show is incomplete and at least the first match is missing. That's something you have to expect on something like this though.

Jerry Monte vs. Buddy Rose

Rose is a big time heel. After some quick stalling it's Rose taking Monte down and slapping on a chinlock. That goes nowhere so Rose, in his overly huge trunks, misses an elbow and gets caught in an armbar. Well at least

Monte has some psychology to him. They trade slams and it's right back to that armbar.

Back up and we get some miscommunication as both guys try a drop down at the same time. I don't think I've ever seen that one before. Monte slaps on a third armbar until Buddy fights up with some basic strikes. A rake to the face freaks Buddy out and the fans are getting into this. Buddy whips him hard into the buckle though and drives some knees into the back, setting up a backbreaker (similar to the Irish Curse) for the pin.

Rating: C-. I liked this way more than I was expecting to as Monte was game for a fight here. Rose was obviously going to win, but at least they didn't go with something really simple and boring. Monte tried out there and did some decent stuff with the arm until we got to the only possible conclusion.

Buddy Rose brags about his robe and says he has the accomplishments at 25 years old that no one else has ever had. He's been compared to Ray Stevens, but Rose is just that much better. That match might be coming one day, but Stevens will be facing the man with a steel stomach (seriously), Pepper Gomez, on July 15. Rose knows Gomez has a hard stomach but he can pound on everything else.

The younger generation is taking over and it's no longer Lou Thesz's world. It's Buddy Rose's world because he's earned this reputation. Last week he was wrestling all over the country and he's insulted by having to fight in a preliminary match in the Cow Palace. It's only main events for Rose and only if the money is right. This was an interesting case as the message was good but Rose has an awkward way of speaking and it didn't work as well as it could have. He needed to cut down a bit and get to the point faster, though he got the points across.

Guy Lambert vs. Roddy Piper

We get some more bagpipes before the match. Piper takes his sweet time in taking off the kilt before we can get going. Lambert scores with a quick slam to send Piper outside and three armdrags into an armbar. Piper fights out of a wristlock (how did he ever manage to do that?) and hammers away in the corner, followed by a clothesline for two of his own.

A high backdrop gets the same but Lambert puts on a freaky abdominal stretch. That goes nowhere and Piper punches a lot more before finishing with a pair of swinging neckbreakers.

Rating: D. Boring match here with Piper destroying the guy but with far less energy or entertainment value than last week. The match wasn't that long and Lambert was fine for a jobber, but you expect more from someone like Piper, especially after the really fun match he had last week.

Post match Piper says the match with Mayne was non-title, which is either a mistake on Wikipedia or a lie to sell the rematch on the 15th. Roddy won the match, despite Mayne barking a lot. Every time Piper got up and hit him again, the barking got weaker and weaker. The match was stopped and Mayne attacked him post match, busting him open. The cuts on Piper's face look really awesome. Next up is a title match, as ordered by the NWA. Well at least according to Piper, as the interviewer says it was Mayne's idea.

The rest of the tape is cut off.

Overall Rating: D+. I didn't like this one as much as the previous one but that might be due to the lack of Harley Race being all gruff and awesome. Piper picked things way up in his promo where he went insane as only he could, but the rest of the show didn't do much for me. Then again it would have helped to be able to see the whole thing instead of just under half an hour.

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NWA San Francisco TV – June 24, 1978: Roddy Piper Thinks Someone Is Crazy

San Francisco TV

Date: June 24, 1978

Location: KXTV Studios, Sacramento, California

Commentator: Hank Renner

This is an interesting case as it's pure territory days with Roy Shire's San Francisco area. The big star here would be a young Roddy Piper, who was tearing up southern California before heading up to Portland and then on to the Carolinas and New York. I'm really not sure what to expect here so let's get to it.

Roddy Piper vs. Tony Milan

Piper comes out with the bagpipes, wearing the kilt, a matching hat and a yellow Superman shirt. The fans want to hear some bagpipes and Roddy actually obliges, but the referee would like to have a match. Instead Piper heads outside to play some more until we're FINALLY ready to go. The jobber is maybe 5'5 and Piper pounds him down and nails a knee to the face.

Those trademark punches in the corner and some more forearms to the back of the head continue the squash as Piper is showing some awesome fire out there. A clothesline gets two but Piper pulls him up twice in a row. Piper does the same thing off a swinging neckbreaker before a second is enough to finally end Milan. Total squash and Piper looked like a star.

House show ads tell us of a show on Tuesday, June 27, meaning this is taking place in 1978. The announcer saying that today is June 24 makes it a bit easier. At the house show taking place that night: Harley Race

defending the NWA World Title against Dean Ho.

Piper is also on the card so he talks about being ready for Moondog Mayne for the US Title. Naturally this includes a lot of shouting MOONDOG over and over. Mayne isn't sure if he wants it to be a title match so Piper has agreed to pay \$10,000 to change his opinion. The announcer tells Piper that Mayne ate the check. Mayne might put up the title but it depends on how he's feeling when he gets to the arena. Piper thinks Mayne is crazy and threatens to beat him to a pulp. Roddy would actually win the title but drop it back about a month later. Mayne would be killed in a car accident less than two months later.

Dean Ho shows us a Harley Race match.

Harley Race vs. Mike Stallings

Race's World Title isn't on the line and Gordon Solie is on commentary. I'm not sure when and where this took place. Race elbows him down but misses the falling headbutt. That means nothing though as Race snapmares Mike and drops a knee to the head, only to get taken over into a hammerlock. Race headbutts him out to the floor and grabs a piledriver back inside. Instead of covering though he tries a small package for two. That's a new one but it's a different time. Race drives some shoulders into the ribs in the corner before a suplex (yes just a suplex) gets the pin.

Rating: D+. The match was just a long squash, but it's an interesting case study compared to today. Like I said, Race won with a vertical suplex. Yeah it's a transitional move today, but at this point it was still a big enough move to win matches. It became a big move because Race won matches with it. That's all you need to do to establish a finisher: win matches with it.

Race talks about going around the world to defend the title and how he'll wrestle any man on the face of God's green earth for this belt. People said he won the World Title in a freak accident, but then he won it again and people were saying maybe. He's going to carry these ten pounds of gold until he's ready to retire. There will be a big tournament for the title, but no one can be at his level and everyone knows it. He actually

praises Solie for being a great commentator but everyone knows the champ is here to stay. Race is right too, as he would hold the belt for the next three years, save for about three months of short reigns.

In another interview, Race says Dean Ho isn't the man that is going to take his belt away. Ho eliminated him in a big battle royal last year so Race is coming to the Cow Palace for revenge. He doesn't actually say Ho's name as he talks about how important it is to be the champion. Race isn't coming to the Cow Palace to wrestle, because he wants to hurt Ho.

Dean Ho says he's coming to fight and win the World Title. Notice that he keeps saying the arena and the date over and over so no one is going to forget.

There's a tag match main event but the video is cut off before we can hear the participants.

Overall Rating: C+. Now this was some old school goodness. Notice how the main idea here was to hype up the house shows instead of some major TV match. It's such a different idea compared to what we get today but it still works. On top of that you have Piper and a great example of why Harley Race was one of the most intimidating and awesome guys around. This was a lot of fun and when it only runs about 25 minutes, it's hard to go wrong. Check these things out if you haven't seen a run of the mill territory before.

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CWA Championship Wrestling – November 11, 1978: Before Wrestling Was PC

CWA Championship Wrestling

Date: November 11, 1978

Location: WMC-TV Studios, Memphis, Tennessee

Commentators: Lance Russell, Dave Brown

Back to Memphis in the 70s which means it's Jerry Lawler time. These territories are almost impossible to keep track of as TV isn't always easy to find making records a bit difficult to keep. There's almost no way to tell what's going on at the moment so I'll be as surprised as you are going into this. Let's get to it.

The announcers run down the card for the day as is their custom.

Wayne Ferris/Jimmy Valiant vs. Danny Davis/Sammy Holt

Valiant, by far the biggest star in the match at this point, sends Davis (the Nightmare, not the referee) into the corner to start. The much larger Valiant throws Davis around and pokes him in the eye before slamming him down for two. Ferris comes in, gets in a single shot, and brings Valiant back in for a slam.

Back to Ferris for a knee lift before it's right back to Jimmy again. Ferris comes back in almost immediately as the tags continue. Wayne misses an elbow drop and it's finally off to Holt for some right hands. The hot tag (I think) brings in Jimmy for an elbow to the face and an elbow drop for the pin. For those of you unfamiliar, Ferris is more

famous as the Honky Tonk Man.

Post match Valiant says he's into the music business now and thinks Burt Reynolds slipped him drugs because he can't sleep. He also sold out Madison Square Garden with Bob Seger and tells his girls to not jump around too much. We get a clip of said concert with Jimmy coming out to sing. No sign of Seger himself anywhere. Jimmy sings a song called the Ballad of Handsome Jimmy, which actually was a minor hit in the Memphis market.

Jerry Lawler and Bill Dundee come out to congratulate Valiant on his success with Dundee suggesting a concert along with Lawler. Valiant likes the idea of having Jerry playing some hillbilly music before Valiant would come out and rock like Meat Loaf. Jerry leaves and Dundee has a petition to get a woman named Heather a match against a man to be named later. Apparently Heather recently beat a wrestling bear.

It's time for another tag match but first the heel manager named Chuck Malone yells about Lawler trying to get a girl a match against a man, only to sign the petition anyway. Ok then.

Bounty Hunters vs. Robert Gibson/Jackie Welch

Before the match, Lawler comes out and says that the petition Chuck signed is actually a contract, meaning it's Malone vs. Heather. The Bounty Hunters are cowboy heels from Arizona and I'm sure you know who Gibson is. Malone is required to be sitting in a chair for some reason. David Novak of the Hunters starts with Gibson and it's very strange to see Robert in a singlet.

Novak blocks an armdrag attempt and drops an elbow before laying out Gibson with a knee to the head. Off to Welch who has about the same luck against David. Tag off to Jerry Novak so at least we know both of their names. Welch is thrown to the floor but Jerry punches him off the apron to be an evil jerk. Gibson comes in sans tag but the distraction allows

Malone to piledrive Welch on the floor for the countout.

Rating: D+. This wasn't much to see other than Robert Gibson before he was the lesser half of a famous tag team. The Hunters weren't anything special as they were just standard big heels, probably set up to be fed to Lawler and Dundee down the line. Nothing special here but it wasn't terrible.

Post match Malone and the Hunters destroy Gibson until Lawler and Dundee make the save.

Malone doesn't want to fight Heather (last name Feather) but if he doesn't, he's out of the territory.

Lawler and Dundee, who are the tag team champions and recently beat the Bounty Hunters to take the belts, have agreed to give the Bounty Hunters a rematch if Malone will put up his hair. Jimmy Valiant comes up to suggest a six man tag against Malone and the Hunters but Dundee says let's wait until after the title match so Malone can lose his hair. Valiant says he'll take Malone's hair out in a six man tag so it's no worries.

Lawler says no as well so Valiant calls Jerry jealous and Dundee short (which he is). Jerry compliments Valiant's music and says thanks but no thanks. Jimmy thinks Lawler is jealous because Valiant is the big star here instead of Lawler. Dundee is looking annoyed and Jerry calls Valiant a preliminary wrestler.

Now Valiant thinks Lawler is jealous of everything so Jerry drops some gay slurs about Valiant and says he's been bumming rides with Dundee and Lawler instead of getting his own car. Ferris and someone else come out and Lawler says that Valiant has Ferris' mind warped so much that he looks like a *gay slur edited* as well. Lawler smacks Valiant and security drags them off. Solid heel turn here with Lawler acting like a manly hero before political correctness was a thing (not saying what

Lawler said was ok mind you. It was a very different time).

Terry Sawyer apologizes to Tommy Gilbert over something not important enough to mention.

Don Fargo/Bill Dromo vs. Tommy Gilbert/Terry Sawyer

Gilbert is taken down by Fargo to start but Tommy fights up into a standoff. Off to Dromo for a front facelock on Gilbert before it's off to Sawyer, who apparently wrestled in the Olympics. Back to Fargo who is easily taken down to the mat so it's back to Dromo who takes Sawyer down just as easily. Things break down for a few seconds but the referee is too worried about right hands from Fargo. Gilbert gets caught in the heel corner but Sawyer comes in for another save as things break down again.

Gilbert catches Dromo in a reverse chinlock but Bill lifts him up and into the Fargo corner. Jerry Jarrett, the actual owner of the company (and one of the most brilliant minds in wrestling history) in a RARE on screen appearance, comes to the commentary booth and says he's fined Lawler and Valiant \$500 each. Dromo rolls up Gilbert for two as Sawyer is refusing to tag out. Gilbert dropkicks Fargo down but Sawyer walks down the apron again. Tommy tries to fight off both guys but stops to go after Sawyer, allowing Dromo to elbow Gilbert for the pin.

Rating: D+. This was much more of an angle than a match but the match part of it didn't work at all. It was a big mess with none of the four guys looking like anything special out there. I had a hard enough time telling them apart as they all looked about the same over than Dromo who had writing on his trunks.

Koko Ware vs. Steve Brody

Before Koko grew a B. I think we have a face vs. face match here as they shake hands before the bell. A quick rollup gets two on Steve so he

cranks on the arm a bit. Koko gets to the ropes and hooks a headlock as this is still in first gear. They apparently don't know much about changing gears as Koko hits three straight dropkicks for the pin. Quick match.

Jerry Lawler apologizes to the fans for what happened but not to Valiant.

Pat Kelly/Mike Kelly vs. Bill Dundee/Jerry Lawler

We have about two and a half minutes to go in the show. Mike starts with Dundee and it's the Superstar (Dundee) taking him down before bringing in Lawler. Jerry takes him down with a quick headlock and it's off to Pat. Lawler gets caught in a headlock but grabs one of his own as the time runs out.

The announcers quickly wrap things up to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. This is a show where knowing the stories and characters would have helped a lot. Lawler vs. Valiant would have been a BIG feud so this is definitely the start of something important. Malone seems to be a decent heel manager and the match against the girl would probably have drawn a nice crowd. There were a few too many tag matches here but it wasn't too bad for the most part.

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WWF New York City House Show – August 28, 1978: Night of 1000 Rest Holds

WWF House Show

Date: August 28, 1978

Location: Madison Square Garden, New York City, New York

Commentator: Vince McMahon

So apparently this is a different show than I thought it was. The show is dated wrong and it's about a year after it was supposed to be. We're in the Backlund Era here and tonight he defends against former champion Ivan Koloff. Other than that we have Dusty Rhodes vs. Billy Graham and Andre in a six man tag. Let's get to it.

Stan Stasiak vs. Dominic DeNucci

Stasiak looks old and flabby. They trade some basic holds and it's a standoff. Stasiak hooks the arm but DeNucci makes the rope. Stan gets in a right hand to take over and it's into a front facelock. DeNucci cranks on the arm and bends it over his shoulder which the crowd is pleased with. Stasiak tries his Heart Punch but DeNucci ducks and goes right back to the arm.

We get a technical error as a graphic for the next match pops up on screen during an armbar. Stasiak kicks out of the armbar and is put right back into it, this time on the mat. Now Stasiak hooks the arm and uses the tights to keep DeNucci down. Dominic comes back and it's right back to an armbar to keep Stasiak in trouble. Stasiak finally bails to the floor to break up the monotony. Back in and Stan gets all fired up and pounds away but the Heart Punch is broken up again.

They fight over a full nelson and exchange control of it more than once

each. DeNucci finally says screw this and forearms Stasiak in the face. This match has time limit draw written all over it. They slug it out with Stasiak being staggered. Stasiak hooks a hammerlock and they slug it out some more. DeNucci hooks an abdominal stretch which he drops very quickly.

Stasiak elbows him in the face and both guys are down. Stan hits a cross body of all things for two and DeNucci does the same. I don't think he taught Foley to do that one. The third attempt at a Heart Punch is countered and DeNucci knocks him to the apron. DeNucci works on the hand which apparently was injured coming into this. Dominic hits him with a Heart Punch and then a second one which has Stasiak in trouble.

Stasiak finally hits the Heart Punch...and it has no effect after the hand wrap he had was taken off. Instead he punches Dominic in the face which only gets him tied up in the ropes. They trade punches again with DeNucci in far better shape than Stasiak is here. DeNucci punches him down again and covers but the time limit expires.

Rating: C-. The match was pretty boring but this was a match of the times. The arm work and the punching was pretty dull but the fans were into this which is the point of an opening match. Stasiak was pretty dull in the ring but to be fair it was like six years after he had lost the title in the first place. Not a very good match or anything but at the time it wouldn't have been horrible.

Baron Mikel Scicluna vs. Haystacks Calhoun

Calhoun is a big fat country boy while Baron is a European jerk. Baron pounds away on him but gets caught in the corner by the power of fat. Scicluna hammers away but Calhoun pounds him into the corner again. Off to a bearhug but Baron breaks it with a headbutt. Calhoun knocks him into the ropes and shakes him very hard. That's a new one.

Now Calhoun sits on the other rope so the referee can't untie him. Now

that's just not nice at all. He pokes Scicluna in the eyes but Baron comes back with some punches. Calhoun goes down and Baron uses a wide variety of stomps. The fat man comes back with some kicks and a back elbow to set up the splash for the pin.

Rating: D+. This was more fast paced but it wasn't anything more interesting. Calhoun was one of those fun characters that got the crowd going while Scicluna was one of those evil foreign heels that isn't really all that interesting. For some reason he's in the Hall of Fame though, which is one of the more questionable entries in there. The match wasn't terrible but the first thirty minutes of this show haven't done anything for me so far.

Special Delivery Jones vs. Victor Rivera

Rivera has Freddie Blassie with him so you know he's evil. He stalls a lot but gets in a cane shot to take over. Blassie leaves which I think was a rule of some kind back then. Jones gets knocked to the floor and Rivera stomps on him from inside. That goes on for a few minutes until Jones finally gets in a shoulder through the ropes. Rivera pops him in the ribs again to take over. Jones gets knocked to the floor again and the stalling continues.

He finally gets back in and knocks Rivera to the floor so the stalling can be reversed. We're over five minutes into this now and there might have been a minute of contact so far. Back in now and Rivera stomps away very slowly. Off to a nerve hold as this is going nowhere at all. Jones comes back with some elbows but gets pulled back to the mat. That works so well that they do it again. Jones comes back with a headbutt and dances a bit. A charge into the post misses though and Rivera wins with a suplex.

Rating: F. This was one of the most boring matches I have ever seen. When about nine minutes of a ten minute match are spent either in a nerve hold or stalling, there's no way you can call this a success of any kind. If

this match is any indication, I totally get why his match at WrestleMania went about 30 seconds. Horribly uninteresting match.

WWF World Title: Bob Backlund vs. Ivan Koloff

Bob is defending and Ivan has Albano with him. Backlund has only been champion about six months at this point. It's weird seeing Backlund being in his late 20s and looking even younger. The name graphic leaves the A out of Backlund's name. Backlund backdrops him to start as the crowd goes very silent for some reason. A headscissors puts Ivan down and Backlund holds on with a leg vice around Ivan's head. They go to the mat and Backlund bridges up in a nice power display.

Ivan puts him on the top rope but gets kicked away. Off to another standoff and it's test of strength time. Backlund goes down but comes back with a top wristlock, only to get caught in a headscissors. This goes on for a few minutes until Bob does a reverse nipup to escape. He dropkicks Ivan down and hooks a headscissors of his own as this is getting repetitive. Then again this is the way a lot of these matches went back then so this would be considered a big deal back then.

Backlund takes him back down again but gets caught in headscissors #4 of the night so far. Backlund finally gets out of that one as well and works on the knee a bit. Somehow we're over fifteen minutes into this despite almost nothing happening other than headscissors so far. Bob stays on the leg and hooks a hold on for a few minutes. That's another sign of the times: holds stay on FOREVER. I mean this one has been on for nearly four minutes at this point.

It finally gets broken up and Ivan suplexes him down for two. The idea of selling an injury must not have been invented yet. Or maybe it just doesn't translate into Russian. Ivan hooks a short arm scissors but you can't use that move on Bob Backlund, as in the guy that invented the counter that British Bulldog made famous on Shawn Michaels back in 1992.

Bob puts him on the top rope to counter and hooks something like a spinning toe hold. Thankfully this one lasts less than the usual two hours with Ivan kicking him in the ribs. Ivan sends him into the ropes but they ram heads, sending Bob to the floor. Koloff is smart and breaks up the count so he can still win the title. Backlund gets rammed into the post and a backbreaker gets two.

Ivan goes up top for the biggest pop (and possibly the only one so far) of the match but his top rope knee drop misses. Backlund sends him in but gets kicked down again, this time back to the floor again. Koloff breaks up the count again, this time by going up top and jumping down onto the apron, kicking Bob in the head on the way down. That would be considered a big spot back then.

Backlund is busted open and we have to have the doctor look at it. That doesn't work so the fight continues. Backlund goes off as he is known to do and Ivan is in trouble. A backdrop puts the challenger down...and the match is stopped because of the cut. Trash fills the ring and I can't quite say I blame them for that.

Rating: C-. The ending was stupid but it had more to do with the athletic commission rather than the booking or anything. That being said, it made no sense to say Backlund can't continue when he was beating the tar out of Koloff but whatever. Also, this match was fairly boring as I was looking for things to talk about during those rest holds which went on forever. I know it's a different era, but that doesn't make it any less dull.

Backlund wants to keep going but Ivan walks away. The title doesn't change hands for some reason even though Ivan wins.

Luck Graham vs. Peter Maivia

Peter would of course be more famous for his grandson than anything he ever accomplished. Graham's nickname is either Crazy or Fabulous

depending on who you listen to. Peter is pretty short but he looks tough. Some bodybuilder is on commentary now with Vince. Feeling out process to start with no one having an advantage so far. Graham hooks the wrist for the first advantage of the match.

Vince criticizes Luke's physique but he doesn't own the company yet so it doesn't mean as much at the moment. The hold goes on for awhile as is the custom in the 70s. Maivia finally rakes the eyes to break the hold before firing off some right hands. I think Maivia is the face here but it's really not clear. Samoans tend to be evil but it would be weird to have a big monster like Luke against a tiny villain.

Peter hooks a nerve hold on Graham before punching him in the face again. Off to a bearhug as it does appear that Maivia is the bad guy here. Luke pokes Maivia in the throat to escape and both guys are down. Graham drops some slow motion ax handles onto the back of Maivia and they slug it out a bit. Peter chokes away as this match needs to end pretty soon. Maivia charges into a punch and Graham hits him in the throat again...and that's a DQ.

Rating: D. The match was boring already because someone decided to give this fourteen minutes, and then they gave us that lame ending. I still have no idea who I was supposed to like in there but I think it was Maivia. Either way this was a really uninteresting match and the fans didn't seem to care at all either.

Dusty Rhodes vs. Billy Graham

This is a Texas Bullrope match and it's pin or not being able to answer an 8 (yes 8) count. Jay Strongbow is referee for some reason. Graham doesn't want to be tied up so Strongbow grabs him and ties him up anyway. Graham keeps running and Dusty keeps pulling him in. The elbow to the head puts Graham down and he tries to run again. Another elbow stuns Graham but he rakes the eyes to get a break.

Dusty gets choked by the rope but Billy misses an elbow drop. The Dream is busted open and Graham hooks his bearhug. That doesn't last long for some reason so Billy goes up top. That's REALLY FREAKING STUPID in a bullrope match as Dusty pulls him down to the mat. Billy is busted too and Dusty pounds away. Apparently this is the rubber match in a series. Graham comes back but Strongbow breaks it up for some reason. Dusty elbows him in the head and that's enough for the 8 count and the win. That was a really abrupt ending.

Rating: C. This was fun while it lasted but unfortunately that wasn't too long. There's something cool about letting two guys beat the stuffing out of each other and that's what happened here. I still don't get what Strongbow had to do with this but maybe it was Graham's next feud. Dusty never did much in the WWF but he did enough elsewhere to make up for it.

Women's Title: Vicki Williams vs. Fabulous Moolah

Who do you think is defending? Moolah looks very different with black hair. Vicki whips her around by said hair to start and grabs an armbar. Moolah takes her down into a cross armbreaker but Vicki easily counters. That counter sequence goes on for awhile until Moolah says screw this wrestling nonsense and chokes away in the corner. Sunset flip gets two for Vicki. Moolah grabs a rollup out of nowhere for the pin.

Rating: D. Nothing to see here but that was common for the girls back then. Moolah held the title for about 20 years so it was pretty common to see her win here. Vicki was the challenger of the week for her so it's not like this match meant anything. Vicki probably trained her too.

The main event is one I've done from Best of the WWF Volume 14 so I'll just copy and paste it.

Spiros Arion/Yukon Lumberjacks vs. Andre the Giant/Tony Garea/Dino Bravo

This is from the late 70s. The Lumberjacks are the tag champions and named Eric and Pierre. We're in MSG here and this is 2/3 falls. Very international match here with three Canadians, a Frenchman, a Greek and a New Zealander. Vince is the lone commentator here and actually calls Andre Andre Roussimoff. Eric is the Lumberjack with blonde hair. Got it. He starts with Garea.

Two quick armdrags send Eric running to bring in Arion. I think we're clipped but I'm not sure. This is just punching. Off to Pierre, meaning Garea has fought all three guys now. Off to a top wristlock and I think the camera is just jumping around a lot. Either that or it's the best clipping I've ever seen. Eric comes in again and gets slammed. The heels finally get Tony into the corner but Andre breaks that up, drawing a DQ for the first fall. I forgot it was 2/3 so that bell was really surprising. Oh wait the Lumberjacks got disqualified for the triple teaming. Ok then.

Garea and Eric start the second fall as well. Bravo comes in for the first time and I've never seen him move that fast. Arion comes in and we get a crisscross. Bravo beats Eric up for awhile but Pierre comes in to take over. A slam gets two. Off to Andre and the place erupts. See, this is something you don't have in WWE anymore: an attraction. Andre was someone that was beloved and the people didn't care what he did.

Andre here is in the last match of the night (more brilliant booking. Why have him in the middle and let everyone leave after he's been in the ring? More beers and Cokes sold while people wait) and it's a worthless six man tag, but the people want to see him. It's not about some angle or the world title or whatever. It's about Andre and whatever he's doing. The people told the company what they wanted to see and that's who got the big spot. Not the other way around. Very key difference. As for the match, a splash ends it about 10 seconds after Andre comes in.

Rating: C-. The match was boring, but it's amazing to see

something like Andre when he was still young(ish) and could move. The crowd reacts to him and that's all it needs to be. He didn't have to spend ten minutes sucking up to them. He was cool and the fans reacted to it. What more did you need than that?

Overall Rating: D+. The best thing I can say about this is that I've seen worse. The 70s are just such a different time that it's hard for a modern fan to watch something like this and get into it. The wrestling wasn't that great here but it wasn't the worst ever. The ton of rest holds hurt things a lot and the crowd wasn't all that excited about a lot of this stuff. It really is amazing how much Hogan changed everything just a few years after this.

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