

WWF Heavyweight Wrestling – January 13, 1966: Sometimes Simpler Is Better

WWF Heavyweight Wrestling

Date: January 13, 1966

Location: National Arena, Washington D.C.

Commentator: Ray Morgan

I've got another show here from the same era and the main change here is that Bruno is in the house. He's not in the ring but just seeing him in his early glory years is a very rare thing, when you consider the only match most of you have seen of his is likely the battle royal from Mania 2 or the Showdown at Shea cage match. Anything from this era, even not as a wrestler, could be interesting. Let's get to it.

After an intro about the card tonight and hearing about the card for Monday's house show, we're ready to go.

Steve Stanlee vs. Curtis Iaukea

Stanlee is called Mr. America here. Iaukea is a heel and a big fat islander. He also has someone who might be the top heel manager in Bobby Davis. Curtis starts fast with big clubbing blows to send Stanlee out to the floor. Back in and Iaukea stomps him down again, allowing Davis to choke away a bit. Off to a chinlock followed by a headscissors by the guy that weighs nearly 400lbs. Back to the floor as the squashing continues. We head back in and Iaukea hits a splash for the pin.

Rating: D. Just a long squash here as Stanlee disappoints America. Iaukea would be a pretty successful monster heel over the years, often getting title shots against Sammartino. You might remember him from 1995 WCW, portraying the Master in the Dungeon of Doom. Why they picked him I'm not

sure but whatever. Match was nothing of note.

Hector Serrano vs. Tomas Marin

This is 2/3 falls. Ok Serrano is the shorter one. Got it. I'm pretty sure Marin is the face here but I'm not quite sure. Feeling out process to start with Serrano hitting a forearm when he should be breaking clean. Marin headlocks him down and Hector is ticked off. Serrano shakes his hand and declares himself a gentleman before smacking Marin in the face. Now there's a good heel.

Marin takes him down by the knee and cranks on it for a bit. Serrano comes back with a kind of monkey flip before being taken right back down again. Hector grabs Serrano's arm to take over and politely asks the referee to not bother him. Marin fights up and is ready to fight now so Hector hides in the corner. We get a crisscross culminating in a one footed dropkick and a crossbody by Marin for the first fall.

The second fall starts with Serrano taking Marin down with a snapmare and dropping some knees. Apparently Freddie Blassie has sent Bruno Sammartino a telegram saying he's coming for the title. Sammartino ripped it up and Vince McMahon is trying to set up the match. See how easy it is to set up a match? Tomas puts on a chinlock followed by a rolling body vice. Serrano comes back with a shot to the knee and throws Serrano out to the floor. I guess that's not a DQ here.

From the apron, Marin shoulders Serrano a few times and hits a decent looking slingshot splash for two. Hector chills on the floor for a bit. By a bit, I mean he walks around for like three minutes. He finally gets back in and is immediately knocked right back outside. They do the exact same thing again as the announcer talks about driving safely.

Back in finally and Serrano runs a bit more....before heading to the floor for the fourth time. Oddly enough when Hector comes back in he GOES OFF on Tomas, hitting a bunch of headlock takeovers. The fourth one or so

though is countered into a belly to back suplex to give Marin the pin and the win.

Rating: C-. Decent match here and Serrano did a good job of getting heat from the crowd, but at the same time it was a REALLY long match that didn't need to go as long as it did. Neither guy was anything special and odds are they were there because they were Puerto Rican. That was a common idea back then: have guys that are there to play to an ethnic group. It worked really well for the Italian people with Sammartino.

Tony Altimore vs. Antonio Pugliese

Bruno is in his cousin Antonio's corner. This is odd: the announcer talks about Antonio having just arrived from Italy, despite him being in a match last week. Odd indeed. This is one fall to a finish. Antonio controls the arm to start and puts on a full nelson. Altimore keeps countering but Pugliese keeps putting the hold right back on. Back to the arm as the match continues a relatively slow pace.

Off to a chinlock by Antonio as he makes Tony crawl for the ropes. Antonio puts on a bearhug but Altimore is against the ropes. Tony: "WE BREAK CLEAN IN THIS COUNTRY!" Antonio speeds things up and flips over Tony's back before hitting a pair of dropkicks to send Altimore to the floor. Back in and Antonio cranks on the arm a bit more before Tony comes back with a forearm in the corner. This fires up Pugliese and he pounds away on Altimore in the corner before hooking a quick side rollup for the pin.

Rating: C. Decent main event here with Antonio continuing to look strong soon after debuting. Apparently he would later wrestle under the name of Tony Parisi who is someone I've heard of. Anyway, not bad here as the fans were WAY into Antonio because of his relation to Bruno. That's called giving a rub and you hardly ever see it again.

Post match Tarzan Tyler (future half of the first ever WWF World Tag Team

Champions) comes out....and does nothing at all.

Post break Altimore and Tyler say they think Bruno is in trouble against Baron Mikel Scicluna.

Overall Rating: C+. Another pretty fun show here which flew by. It only runs about fifty minutes and we got three pretty long matches out of that. Even though we didn't see Baron and Bruno interact, they did a decent job of building up the match later in the month. It's pretty clear how the TV shows were used to set up the major house shows and that system would work for years. Pretty fun stuff here.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews

WWF Heavyweight Wrestling – January 6, 1966: Wrestling TV From Nearly 50 Years Ago

WWF Heavyweight Wrestling

Date: January 6, 1966

Location: National Arena, Washington D.C.

Commentator: Ray Morgan

To give you an idea of how old this is, when this aired my girlfriend's mother hadn't been born yet, the original world tag team titles were about six years away, and Vince was twenty years old. This is by far the oldest show I've ever reviewed and I have absolutely no idea what to expect from it. This is a completely different era and the ratings are going to be a little bit lighter because I have no idea what's going on

for the most part. Let's get to it.

I'm pretty sure this aired live and it would have been on a Thursday night.

After the announcer runs down the card for tonight, we spend a few minutes standing around before we're ready to go.

Antonio Pugiliese/Arnold Skaaland vs. Angelo Savoldi/Tony Altimore

This is 2/3 falls. Antonio is billed as Bruno Sammartino's cousin, which is an old tactic to give people a head start to getting over. Before the match, the announcer praises Vince McMahon (senior) for making up next week's card already. We also hear the term dark match on television, as we hear of Bruno appearing in a tag match at the end of the taping next week. Skaaland's team is the crowd favorite here.

Altimore and Skaaland get things going here with Tony trying to lure him into the heel corner. This goes nowhere until Arnold slaps him in the face and hooks an armbar. Savoldi tries to come in so the faces change without tagging. The referee throws Savoldi out so the good guys cheat again, resulting in Arnold hooking another armbar. Altimore counters into a front facelock/choke which he keeps getting admonished for.

Antonio comes in and hooks a cravate on Altimore. He lays Altimore on the mat and pulls on Tony's arms with his feet on Tony's shoulders in a submission hold which gets a bunch of two counts. Antonio literally rides around on Altimore as he crawls on all fours. Tony finally gets up and yells a lot, nearly punching out the referee. Antonio takes Altimore down again and hits a flying headscissors to bring Savoldi in as well.

Antonio snap mares Tony down as Savoldi tries to cheat some more, only to get hit in the chest. I don't think Savoldi has been in yet at all. Naturally as I say that he gets tagged in, only to run away, landing in

the wrong corner. Skaaland, ever the nice guy, holds Angelo in the corner so Antonio can hammer away. The heels double team Antonio in the corner as I guess we're waiting on a hot tag to Arnold.

Scratch that as well as Antonio clotheslines Angelo down and brings in Skaaland for a full nelson. Altimore's cheating fails as he hits Savoldi in the exposed chest. Savoldi backdrops Skaaland and I think we get a botch, as Angelo looks surprised that it worked. Immediately thereafter, they do the same spot with Skaaland hooking a sunset flip for the pin and the first fall.

It's Skaaland vs. Altimore to start the second fall with Arnold hitting a quick monkey flip. The thud on the mat sounded like thunder going off. Tony starts choking and is immediately caught, but it's enough to let Savoldi get in some choking. Skaaland avoids a shot in the corner and the heels nearly have a fight over it. The legal guys circle each other for a bit before Altimore grabs Arnold's arm for some cranking.

Savoldi tries to come in but Antonio literally chases him away. Everything breaks down for a bit until we get back to normal with Altimore punching Skaaland down. Unfortunately he punches him into Antonio who picks Tony up and lays him on the top rope. Antonio pounds Altimore over and over again in the face before dropping some knees to the head for the jackknife pin.

Rating: C+. For a match that ran over twenty minutes, I had no problem with this at all. It wasn't exactly the Midnights vs. the RNRE, but this certainly wasn't boring. A lot of the moves are ones you would see today and it was clear who the good guys and bad guys were. The ending with Altimore getting beaten down and pinned was fine stuff. This wasn't boring at all and I'm rather surprised by that.

Post match Altimore is out of it, taking a bit swing at the air and falling down in a heap.

Pete Sanchez vs. The Beast

Beast has body hair that would make George Steele jealous. I think he's supposed to be a savage or something like that. Beast immediately charges at Sanchez and the brawl starts fast. We hear about Beast getting a shot at Bruno in February which sounds pretty awesome. Beast pounds Sanchez down and sends him into the corner for stomping and choking by his manager, Bobby Davis.

One of the buckles has come undone and Beast does nothing about it. Ok then. You can hear individual fans shouting to the referee that Davis is cheating which is a true sign of the times. Beast really likes forearms to the back. He hooks a chinlock followed by a bearhug and a Boston Crab to make Sanchez give up.

Rating: D. This was a somewhat extended squash and they did a good job at making Beast look good here. The problem is that about 90% of his offense was forearms to the back. Sanchez would be around for years as he was Ric Flair's first opponent in Madison Square Garden, and Flair didn't start wrestling until the 70s.

Beast takes awhile to let go of the hold, making Davis smile a lot.

Smasher Sloane vs. Ronnie Etchison

This is Etchison's debut and Sloane is your villain. Ronnie starts with a top wristlock which goes nowhere so he takes Sloane to the mat. They fight over the wristlock for a good while as this is boring stuff so far. Sloane takes him to the mat so Etchison shoves him away. A chop gets two on Sloane so he rolls to the floor. Back in and Sloane pounds away in the corner to take over. Ronnie comes back with a monkey flip and some knee lifts, followed by a front facelock.

They brawl a bit more with Sloane taking over via evil means. He keeps

choking Ronnie against the ropes followed by some hiptosses. Etchison hits a kind of spear followed by some dropkicks to send Sloane back to the floor. Sorry for all the play by play but it's not like I have much to talk about here. I've heard of Sloane before but that's it for both guys. Oh and you have until a 20 count to get back in. The match ends with a curfew draw. Yeah back in the day, wrestling couldn't go past a certain time in a lot of areas so matches legitimately had to be stopped.

Rating: D. Another dull match here which is annoying given that this was supposed to be a big debut. Like I said though, the curfew thing was something that happened back in the day and annoyed everyone. The match itself was really boring as it was all punching and kicking, which is a staple in wrestling. Nothing to see here and the fans back in the 60s didn't seem thrilled with it either.

The announcer wraps things up.

Overall Rating: C-. The last two matches weren't all that great, but man alive the opening tag match was solid stuff. Considering it ran nearly half the show, that's a great sign. Obviously you can't compare the show to a modern one, but this worked really well all things considered. A lot of people would get bored by it because they have no idea who is who, but it's definitely not terrible. I have next week's show also so I'll check that out too.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews