

HIDDEN GEM: Muhammad Ali Wrestles (Kind Of)

The star power is insane here.

Muhammad Ali vs. Buddy Wolfe

Date: June 12, 1976

Location: International Amphitheater, Chicago, Illinois

There's a lot to unpack here as yes it is that Ali (with Freddie Blassie) and Rope has Dick the Bruiser with him. In case that isn't enough, Verne Gagne is the referee. This is part of Ali's training for the famous fight with Inoki and Ali hammers away as Wolfe just stands there. Wolfe finally drives him into the corner and grabs a headlock but Ali shoves him off without much effort. A double leg takedown works better for Wolfe but the rope saves Ali. It works so well that they do it again, followed by Wolfe grabbing another take down.

Back up and...the round ends, as this apparently has rounds. Round two starts with Ali being driven into the corner but coming out swinging. Wolfe puts him up against the ropes and then gets two off a slam. A backbreaker gets one so Ali unloads with right hands to rock Wolfe. That earns him another takedown and Wolfe absorbs some right hands to the face. Back up and Wolfe gets hammered in the corner as the round ends.

Round three begins with Ali pummeling him again but Wolfe gets another takedown without much effort. The same sequence works a bit better for Ali this time around, with Gagne stopping to check on Wolfe. That's enough for Wolfe to take him down into a half crab but Ali makes the rope and unloads again to end the round and fight at 14:00. They get in another fight between rounds, with Ali hitting Gagne by mistake. I think it's a draw but Ali is posing like a winner.

Rating: C. I have no idea what else to call this as it was

some kind of weird MMA predecessor, but it did very little to make Ali look good. Ali was taken down over and over here and if someone like Wolfe can do that, what is Inoki going to do? That being said, the whole thing was such insanity that I can't help but like it at least a little bit.

Post match Nick Bockwinkel comes in (because we didn't have enough star power here) to say no boxer can beat a wrestler and challenges Ali if he can beat Inoki.. Nick leaves and Gagne talks about how awesome that was. Vince McMahon gets in and talks to Ali, who promises to beat Inoki and all other wrestlers. Ali thanks Blassie for training him and wants to beat up Bruno Sammartino and Gorilla Monsoon.