

Big Time Wrestling – 1978: His Name Is Garth Vader

Big Time Wrestling

Date: 1978

Location: Detroit, Michigan

Commentators: Chuck Allen, Mark Lewin

This is a rare occasion where I'm totally lost. Big Time Wrestling was a territory that ran for decades in Detroit and was the home promotion of The Sheik (Original, not Iron) and Bobo Brazil. The video I found of this lists it as being from the 60s but it looks a lot newer than that, perhaps into the mid to late 1970s. I honestly have no idea what to expect here which could mean anything. Let's get to it.

Austin Idol is listed as being on the show and the latest debut date I can find for him is 1972.

Big Red/Jim Widell vs. Fabulous Kangaroos

Oh now this is really interesting. The Fabulous Kangaroos are the most famous tag team that you've probably never heard of. They're a team which over time has consisted of about five guys who teamed on and off with the gimmick for about twenty five years. The most famous pairing is Al Costello and Roy Heffernan but today we've got Costello and Bobby (also called Johnny in other promotions) who was billed as Roy's cousin.

Their gimmick is that they're VERY Australian with boomerangs and bush hats and any other stereotype you can think of. They held so many titles that I can't list them all and were often billed as champions on arrival, which became almost a running bit with them. The originals were pioneers of tag team wrestling but by this point they're a fairly established name. Did I mention I've wanted to cover these guys for awhile? I have no

idea who their opponents are but Red is a fat guy with an afro and a big beard.

The Kangaroos have a midair arm wrestling match to determine who gets things going with Heffernan starting against Widell. They head to the mat with some nice technical stuff including Heffernan spinning out of a headscissors. Off to Costello for some right hands before Heffernan comes in again for some stomps. The Kangaroos appear to be heels here which doesn't feel right for some reason. We get a phone number to call to bring Big Time Wrestling to our town with the contact being listed as Pat O'Connor. I'd be surprised if it was the famous O'Connor but it's hard to tell with stuff like this.

Heffernan cranks on the arms before hooking a hammerlock. Back to Costello for an ax handle to the face and some right hands. Big Red tries to come in off a blind tag but the actual tag is a few seconds later. How could I have thought Red and Widell were heels? Red is a big fat jolly dancing man. How could that not be a good guy?

Heffernan tries a slam on the 350lb Red which works as well as you would expect. Red goes after the arm and hooks a hammerlock before asking Costello to come in. The big man gets double teamed in the corner but he waddles over to Widell for a tag but the Kangaroos hit the Boomerang (catapult into a backdrop followed by an elbow) for the pin.

Rating: D+. Other than the dancing fat guy, there wasn't much to this. The Kangaroos didn't do much for me, though to be fair they were past their primes at this point. This was really just a basic tag match and the finisher came out of nowhere while not looking very good either. Not a terrible match but nothing memorable at all.

Red cleans house post match because he's a sore loser.

Abdullah the Butcher vs. John Irish

This is joined in progress and the jobber isn't even given a name until after the match. Not that it matters as Butcher runs him over and drops an elbow for the pin in maybe 30 seconds shown.

Post match Abdullah chokes away until the referee tries to break it up. That goes nowhere so commentator and wrestler Mark Lewin gets up from commentary and makes the real save with no violence.

Billy Bird vs. The Sheik

Sheik has apparently turned face after being a legendary heel in this territory. For those of you unfamiliar, Sheik is basically the father of hardcore wrestling in America and is the real life uncle of Sabu. Sheik bites away on the ropes to start but is cheered anyway. Bird is thrown to the floor and rammed face first into the buckle a few times before the camel clutch gives Sheik a very fast win.

Austin Idol vs. Steve Cooper

Idol is a newcomer and your usual self-obsessed heel. He would feud with Lawler in Memphis for the better part of ever. A slam gets two on Cooper and Idol shouts down that he could do this to Lewin as well. Cooper is thrown down onto the announcers' table before coming back in for the Rack (not the Torture variety but rather Idol driving his knuckle into Cooper's temple) and the submission.

Dory Funk Jr./Pierre LaFiv vs. Kurt Von Hess/Bulldog Don Kent

I'm sure you know of Funk. Kent was another of the Fabulous Kangaroos at times but here's he's just a heel. We do however get a clue as to the date here as Lewin says Dory Funk Sr. has two sons who won the NWA World Title, meaning this is sometime after December 10, 1975. Dory throws the

plump Kent down before countering a clothesline into an armbar in a cool looking move. Off to LaFiv for an armbar before the German Von Hess comes in and is easily armdragged down.

Back to Dory for a headlock of his own before getting caught in a top wristlock. Hess gets forearmed into the corner and it's off to Bulldog for more armbars. The good guys user both use headlocks on Kent with LaFiv taking him to the mat for a bit. Off to Von Hess for some arm work on Pierre as we get into what would be called the heat segment today. Dory is drawn into the ring, allowing for some heel double teaming and a chinlock from Kent.

We get the same sequence of the heels drawing Dory in so Pierre can be sent to the floor. The heels stay on LaFiv but he finally rolls away and makes the hot tag off to Funk who cleans house. A butterfly suplex puts Von Hess down and there are some forearms for the Bulldog. Dory misses an elbow and gets punched down, only to grab a small package on Kurt for the pin out of nowhere.

Rating: C+. Nice match here with Dory being the most interesting thing out there. I know it's a cliché, but guys like him could just go back in the day. LaFiv was nothing special and Kent was overweight, but Von Hess looked good and was a strong foreign heel character. Good little match here.

Post match Funk gets beaten down and busted open until Terry Funk makes the save. A fan has to give up his t-shirt to wrap around Dory's head. Some first aid. Kent and Austin Idol come back out to try another fight but the Funks stare them down.

Garth Vader vs. Stan Stasiak

Yes serious, Garth Vader and he wears a mask with stars on it. Stasiak is a former WWF Champion. He pounds away on Vader with his taped up hand (for his Heart Punch) before putting on a nerve hold. One good thing

here: Terry Funk is called a former NWA World Champion so this is sometime after February 6, 1977.

Stasiak pounds away on the chest before throwing him out to the floor. Back in and Stasiak fires off more right hands before letting Vader get back up. They box for a bit before Stasiak takes it to the floor and throws Vader at the announce table. Cue Sheik to throw a garbage can at Stasiak, only to have Stan hit a quick Heart Punch for the pin on Garth.

Rating: D. This was rather dull but seriously....HIS NAME WAS GARTH VADER??? I haven't seen much of Stasiak but given that his biggest claim to fame is a nine day world title reign, there isn't much to see of him on top of the world. Still though, I can't get over the name Garth Vader. I think it's safe to say this is after Star Wars came out.

Sheik chases off Stasiak post match. Stasiak says after he gets done with Sheik, he's coming for Lewin. Why isn't Lewin the top guy in the company as apparently everyone wants to kill him. Sheik pounds on him with a card table but Stasiak won't get in the ring with him. They're still chasing each other as the fans want Sheik to take Stasiak apart. Sheik finally gets in a table shot and pounds away on Stasiak, even hitting him with his own Heart Punch. Sheik leaves and Stasiak goes over to the announce table saying he was still up but everyone else goes down when Stasiak hits him. Stasiak talks trash to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. As much trouble as I had figuring out where this was, there wasn't a lot of bad stuff on here. This is actually a stacked show with a ton of big names and a (for the time) insane three former world champions on the same card. It's not something I'd watch week to week but still this worked out well enough. Good show here.

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