

On This Day: May 22, 1982 – Philadelphia House Show: A Brutal Show For A Brutal Crowd

WWF House Show

Date: February 22, 1982

Location: Philadelphia Spectrum, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 11,513

Commentators: Dick Graham, Kal Rudman

Here's a show from an era that you don't often hear from. This is during the Backlund is champion era and is one of the many house show cities that had its own TV show. In other words, this show was filmed and aired on TV in the Philadelphia market. Snuka is making his Philly debut tonight and Backlund is facing Bob Orton, presumably for the title. Let's get to it.

The announcers talk about the show for awhile. They sound nothing like what most wrestling announcers do and I'm not sure if I like that or not. There's talk of some new hold called the Crossface Chickenwing.

We get a clip from last month of Tony Atlas vs. Jesse Ventura. Jesse is controlling with a full nelson but misses an elbow drop. Atlas comes back to dropkick him to the floor and Atlas goes after him. Jesse rams Tony into the table and busts him open then slides in to win by countout. Atlas wants to keep up the fight but Jesse runs. The full match ran 15 minutes apparently but we only got about three here. There's a cage match later between these two.

Gary Michael Capetta is the ring announcer. For some reason he gets booed.

Charlie Fulton vs. Larry Sharpe

Sharpe is far more famous as the trainer of Bam Bam Bigelow, Raven and Big Show among a lot more. He's a pretty boy in white. Sharpe jumps Fulton to start and knocks him to the floor and it takes awhile for Charlie to get back in. Sharpe throws him back out to the floor again as Fulton is looking pretty awful here. Fulton comes back in with right hands and grabs the arm.

Sharpe headbutts him in the ribs and takes over again. Fulton is a guy that never really went anywhere so I'm curious as to whether he's a jobber here or not. Fulton comes back with nothing but punches and is kicked in the face on a backdrop attempt. Sharpe goes up but gets slammed down. Since Fulton can't manage to make a sandwich without getting beaten up, Sharpe throws him into the ropes to take over (as in Sharpe whipped him in and Fulton hit them chest first and fell down) and hits a piledriver to end this.

Rating: F+. What was that? Fulton was TERRIBLE out there and looked like a jobber that didn't realize he was a jobber. Sharpe didn't do much better but he looked like he was far better out there and the bigger deal. Also that wasn't a bad piledriver. This was a very strange match though as it was like a squash that went awkwardly.

Sharpe says his conditioning is bad so that's why it took so long. That's not something you often hear.

Baron Mikel Scicluna vs. Pete Sanchez

The Baron is in the WWE Hall of Fame for some reason, despite most people having no idea who he is. He's a heel here and the announcer says he'll probably use a foreign object. He's from Malta so if it's a Maltese object is that really foreign? We start with a bearhug on Sanchez which isn't a normal starting move. Sanchez grabs a headlock and Baron looks bored. Baron hides in the corner and might have pulled out an object.

The referee stops to check him for weapons but doesn't find one. Baron goes to the corner with his back to the ring again and again the referee checks him. Where would he have gotten an object in between there? Pete grabs a wristlock and the referee kicks Baron's arm off the ropes. He then makes the FASTEST COUNT EVER but Baron gets his shoulder up. That would be a heel turn move today.

We play hide the object again and apparently there is one in existence but the referee can't find it. Typical. Baron almost shoves the referee but that isn't a DQ. Baron chops him down and I kid you not, he looks like he's in slow motion. Pete takes over and kicks him very low but it's also not a DQ. Baron pulls out the object, holds it in the air like he found it in a Hylian dungeon and hits Pete in the throat with it for the pin.

Rating: D-. This show is three and a half hours long. Oh what have I gotten myself into? The wrestling in the early 80s was...how do I put this nicely.....REALLY BAD. It's mostly punches and kicks here and the whole foreign object bit. We get the idea but that was the whole match. To be fair though, it's 1982 and this is the second match on a card and it runs 8 minutes. I'm probably overreacting here, but it's still pretty boring.

Pete finds the object post match and drills Baron with it.

One of the announcers says hi to a fan that Backlund has talked to who is too sick to be able to come to a show. Cool.

Swede Hanson vs. Laurent Soucie

Now there's a new announcer who must be in his mid 70s. Swede tries to control with a top wristlock to start and takes it to the mat controlling the arm. And never mind as they break it up quickly. Here's the basic story of the match: Swede tries to put a hold on him, Laurent runs away. Laurent hits him with a forearm and Swede looks annoyed. Apparently Swede has a

habit of slapping people in the face. Well that's just rude of him. In a really sudden and different ending, Swede grabs a backbreaker and bends Laurent over his knee, which gets a submission.

Rating: D. Well they're getting better. Not a good match or anything but it's a step up over the other two dismal performances we saw earlier tonight. This show is somehow almost forty minutes in now and it's been dreadful. Swede was another generic bad guy which is getting a little tiresome.

Mr. Saito vs. Johnny Rodz

Saito is a Japanese guy and Rodz is supposed to be nuts. He trained a ton of ECW guys, namely Dreamer, Taz and the Dudleys. Saito jumps him to start and I think Rodz is the heel here. Rodz is in trouble but does the equivalent of HULKING UP and shrugs Saito off. He grabs a headlock and cranks on that sucker. A middle rope elbow to the head is followed by a second one and Saito is in trouble.

Back to the headlock and Saito tries to crawl over the ropes to escape. That's quite a headlock. Saito comes back with a superkick and a middle rope chop to the shoulder. Here's a nerve hold and Rodz's arms start shaking. Saito strikes away in the corner but misses a charge to allow Rodz to hammer away. Rodz tries an O'Connor roll out of the corner but Saito ducks, sending Rodz's head into the corner which gets the pin. Well you can't say they're overused finishes.

Rating: C-. It might be because of how weak the first three matches were but I was getting into Rodz' energy out there. He wasn't doing much else besides punching but sometimes that's all you need to do. Not a good match or anything and we had another unusual ending but it's by far the most entertaining match of the night so far.

Intercontinental Title: Pedro Morales vs. Jimmy Snuka

Snuka has only been around for a few months at this point but the fans are loving him, despite him being a heel. The announcers aren't sure what to do with him because they know he's popular but he's supposed to be the evil savage. He has a thing for flowers apparently. Snuka wrestles barefoot which is another thing that made him different. The fans here are split which is a weird sight.

They fight over a top wristlock to start and Snuka complains of a hair pull. Snuka takes it to the mat with arm control and Dick Worthle is the referee. He died a few days ago so that's kind of sad to see. Now Snuka pulls the hair to keep the advantage. See how easy a heel move that is? Such little things like that one are just lost in modern wrestling.

Snuka runs him over and headbutts Pedro down as the fans applaud. Now keep in mind: Pedro is a very popular guy. He held the IC Title forever and was a former world champion. However, Snuka was a totally different kind of guy and the fans, especially the Philly crazy people, took notice and loved him. Pedro is in trouble and gets knocked to the floor by a forearm. All Snuka so far.

Out to the floor and Pedro goes into the apron. Back in and Pedro is almost knocked right back out. Off to a chinlock for a few moments and Pedro FINALLY gets up. He hits his first decent offense of the match in the form of a backdrop but Snuka takes him right back down again. A middle rope headbutt half kills Pedro and you would think that Snuka was the top guy in the company based on the fans' reactions.

That only gets two though and Snuka has a headache from the headbutt. Pedro grabs the face and works it over (that's not something I'm used to typing) and starts his comeback. He hits his big left and Jimmy looks like he's dancing. Out to the floor and Snuka tastes the steel. A BIG left hand sends Snuka flying into the ropes. Snuka rakes the eyes which doesn't really do much good. Pedro hits a knee to the chin and then

shoves the referee because of that firey Latin temper of him. Now Pedro throws him to the floor and it's a LAME DQ.

Rating: C+. Well it wasn't a classic or anything as Pedro was way too fond of just throwing the left hand but the crowd was very energetic for this as they were both very popular guys. Notice that the match is very similar to the rest of them but the names are bigger. There wasn't much variety in this era and it shows badly at times.

Pedro throws the referee down again and again. Snuka nails Worhle and the brawl continues. Out to the floor and Snuka goes into the post. They KEEP FIGHTING and Snuka headbutts both Morales and the referee at the same time. Snuka finally leaves and the fans aren't pleased with Pedro. Cool brawl though. Morales is mad about the brawl and says bring Jimmy on again anytime.

Steve Travis vs. Blackjack Mulligan

Mulligan is Barry Windham's dad and Husky Harris' grandfather. He's also about the size of the Undertaker so this is a painful match for Travis. Travis is thrown to the floor and goes into the post quickly. Back in Travis charges into a knee in the corner and Mulligan hooks the Claw around the throat. Travis manages to get in some offense to send Mulligan to the outside where he takes a quick walk. Back in Mulligan hooks the Claw in a nerve hold and Travis is in trouble again. Steve elbows his way out of it but walks into a back elbow as he runs the ropes which gets Blackjack the pin.

Rating: D-. Just an observation here, but you don't see a lot of near falls at all. The fans spent most of the match chanting for Andre because of a battle of the giants thing going on but he never showed up. The Blackjacks were old school heels in the black hat wearing cowboy attire but they were pretty effective back then.

Mulligan berates the commentators post match because no one

knows what he'll do next so there's no point in talking about him. Can I introduce you to a Mr. Michael Cole? Oh and he's the real giant because he's AMERICAN. He'll just take all of Andre's deals and contracts while he's at it.

WWF World Title: Bob Backlund vs. Bob Orton Jr.

This is Orton's return it seems. This is called the main event despite three more matches after this. Backlund outmoves him to start and trips Orton easily. Orton, a very good scientific wrestler in his own right, can't keep up with Backlund at all and almost gets sent to the floor because he can't even stand up when Backlund goes after him. There's an abdominal stretch by the champ but Orton escapes.

Backlund hooks a top wristlock so Orton braces against the referee to backflip out of it. The champ trips him immediately but it was a cool visual. We get a test of strength and Backlund monkey flips him over but maintains the grip. Off to a bodyscissors as this is all Backlund so far but he's not doing much damage. Instead he's getting in Orton's head which is a lot more interesting.

Backlund fakes him out on two monkey flips so Orton tries an elbow. Backlund avoids THAT and Orton is ticked off so he heads to the outside to cool off a bit. Backlund looks awesome so far. Orton tries an armdrag and is IMMEDIATELY taken into a headscissors. Backlund is so fast. I just realized they're both named Bob so I had to go back and edit that name out. Pinfall reversal sequence results in a backslide for two for Backlund.

Orton wants a handshake and actually doesn't sucker Backlund in. They go to the ropes and Backlund gives him a clean break but the Cowboy doesn't, smashing Backlund with an elbow. Out to the floor and Backlund goes into the steel as Orton takes over. Backlund gets whipped over the railing and may have hurt his back. Somehow he's not counted out so Orton stomps on him

some more.

Here comes the superplex which is Orton's finisher. Why can't more people use basic moves like that and have them be built up as finishers? Anyway Backlund breaks that up and hits a middle rope forearm to knock Orton into the corner. Backlund hooks a suplex and pounds on Orton. Orton is in big trouble and rolls to the floor. Back inside and Backlund hits a not that great piledriver for two.

Orton comes back with a belly to back suplex and both guys are down. They slug it out from their knees and Orton gets his knee up in the corner to take Backlund down. Orton goes lucha and tries a Vader Bomb but it gets knees. Backlund knocks him to the floor which doesn't last long as Backlund knees him in the head and dropkicks him right back to the floor. Now Orton is running which is where we get to the interesting part of Backlund which I'll get to later. Out to the floor and Orton finds a rope from somewhere to choke Backlund with and the champ misses the count, giving Orton the win.

Rating: B. This was a very fun match as Backlund was the guy who was rather uninteresting until he was pushed to the edge when he would blow everyone away like he did here with Orton. He's a fun guy to watch and would be even better in stuff like Texas Death Matches where his back was to the wall and he had to fight for everything he had, which he could do quite well. Fun match and by far the best of the night so far.

They put the cage up for Ventura vs. Atlas.

The announcers say Orton should go back to the NWA because he's not ready for the WWF. Now there's a line you might never hear again.

We get a sitdown interview with Jesse Ventura who talks about how awesome the East-West Connection (Ventura/Adrian Adonis) are. They're in People Magazine according to Jesse. There's no place to hide in a cage and after Ventura has beaten Atlas in

everything else, a cage is the last place for them.

Tony Atlas says he's not going to let Ventura up, which goes against what his daddy taught him but it's ok here. He's not worried about the blood either. This interviewer is really bad. They also talk about Rocky 3 and Hulk Hogan (I didn't think he'd be mentioned at this point) and then they talk about Mr. T. being a wrestler. Nah that would never work.

Now the announcers talk about whatever they can to fill in time while the cage is finished. They talk about Backlund vs. Orton for a long time and show some clips of it to show how awesome Backlund is.

Jesse Ventura vs. Tony Atlas

In a cage in case you're really dense. Ventura wants a referee in there with him. Yeah see back in the 80s, you didn't win by some lame pin. You had to get out and leave your opponent in there to win. Jesse stalls forever and tries to escape almost immediately. Atlas gets his hands on him and chops him down before ramming Jesse into the cage. A headbutt puts Jesse down and this is one sided so far.

Ventura gets in a shot but Atlas blocks the shot into the cage. The second attempt works though and Tony is down. Things slow way down as Tony is busted open. Jesse goes up but comes back inside instead of leaving. I've heard a lot about how Jesse isn't the best in ring worker ever but he was a human heat machine and could get a crowd worked up as well as any heel on the roster. That seems to be the case here as the action is awful but Jesse plays to the crowd like a master.

After a very slow beating Jesse goes up but Atlas makes the save. Jesse gets pulled down off the top and might be bleeding a bit as well. He tastes the steel and sells like a master. Then he does it again. And again. Man that's a serious cut on Jesse. He gets in a shot and Atlas is down again. Jesse goes up and poses but Atlas climbs the cage in what must be record

time to climb out and win.

Rating: C-. The selling was good, but the cage felt more like it was hurting them, as they had to find a way to incorporate it. The high amount of punches and forearms got old too which made the match dull. The ton of blood helps though, although the ending sucked with Atlas just leaving instead of beating Jesse down and then leaving.

Jesse calls conspiracy.

Here are the Official Wrestling Ratings.

10. Jay Strongbow
9. Ivan Putski
8. Tony Atlas
7. Bob Orton
6. Adrian Adonis
5. Greg Valentine
4. Pedro Morales
3. Jesse Ventura
2. Black Jack Mulligan
1. Jimmy Snuka

Jimmy Snuka, sounding much more coherent than usual, says he's from the Fiji Islands and raised in Hawaii. The interviewer compares him to Antonino Rocca (Look him up) and we see some clips of Snuka. Apparently cliff diving prepared Snuka for what he does now. Jimmy talks about working in a gym in Hawaii and getting involved in wrestling. This is a lot more like a real interview rather than a promo. The WWF is tough but he wants to be champion. He's not coming off as heelish here at all.

Here's a video package on various wrestlers set to way too happy music.

Mr. Fuji vs. Rick McGraw

Fuji is a tag champion. Feeling out process to start and Fuji grabs the evil nerve hold. That eats up like two minutes until McGraw throws him into the corner and punches away. And never mind as he misses a dive and Fuji ties him up in the ropes. He chokes away and that's a DQ win for McGraw.

Rating: F. This is one of the final matches on the show and it's kind of like the last half hour of Saturday Night Live: they have the time to fill but they've used up all their good stuff so here's something boring that still qualifies as professional wrestling so you can't sue us for false advertising.

We hear about an upcoming battle royal. Some of the entrants are listed and I've reviewed that match before for Best of the WWF Volume 4. Also Backlund vs. Orton in a lumberjack match.

Ivan Putski vs. Adrian Adonis

LONG stall before the match start as Adrian wants to stay in the corner a bit. With his jacket still on he jumps Putski and ties Ivan up with the jacket. There's an atomic drop and a knee drop off the middle rope. Putski is holding his groin due to the atomic drop from earlier. Back in the ring and Adonis hooks a sleeper. That gets two arm drops but Putski stands up and rams Adonis' face into the corner. Adrian goes up but gets crotched. Putski goes off on him but Adonis goes to the eyes to escape. He tries a sunset flip but Putski sits on the chest for the pin.

Rating: D. Another bad match here but I think this is the last one on the card. This was just like the previous match but with bigger names in it. Adonis would be a somewhat big time heel for awhile before becoming too fat to tie his own shoes. Putski got old in a hurry and didn't really do much other than be an ethnic face.

The announcers talk for about seven minutes to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. This is a hard one to grade. Some of the good matches are ok with the world title match being quite good, but three and a half hours is WAY too much for this, especially with how weak some of these matches were. It's amazing how much different the Hogan era is as he blew up the whole idea of what pro wrestling was before he arrived and it changed things. Whether that's for the better I'll leave it up to you.

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