

WWE Hall of Fame: Class of 1996

The last class for eight years and it's not hard to see why.

Baron Mikel Scicluna

This is another one of those names that just happened to be around about twenty years before he was inducted. Scicluna is a guy you'll see a lot of if you watch shows from the late 70s to early 80s and odds are you won't be that impressed. The guy was nothing special and was a pretty generic foreign (Maltese) heel. That doesn't make for an interesting character but he was pretty successful in Australia. Other than that though, I don't see a reason for him to be in a Hall of Fame. This is a no.

Captain Lou Albano

This is one of the few layups of this class. Albano managed a remarkable 15 tag teams to tag titles in his day, as well as being an absolutely hated manager. He was involved with Cyndi Lauper and more or less was the grandfather of Wrestlemania in that sense. Albano had moderate success as a wrestler, but was FAR more successful as a manager. When you manage the guy that ended Sammartino's seven year world title reign, you have to have something going for you. Albano was the top heel manager of the 70s and part of the 80s, so I have zero issue with him going into the Hall of Fame.

Jimmy Snuka

Appropriately enough, Snuka was one of Albano's clients when he started in the WWF. Snuka is one of those guys that is

revered not because of his accomplishments but rather how influential he was. He was the first high flier to be a star in modern wrestling and was pretty easily the second biggest star in the first half of the Hogan Era. I'm sure you've all seen the legendary cage dive onto Muraco that apparently inspired about 974 different wrestlers, all of whom seemed to be in attendance that night. I'm fine with Snuka being in the Hall of Fame, as he's one of the characters that changed the way wrestling worked, which is far more important than winning a title here or there.

Johnny Rodz

This is another one of those guys that is in the Hall of Fame and no one is quite sure why. He's FAR more famous as a trainer, having trained a lot of ECW stars (Dreamer, Tazz, Dudleys), but at the time of his inductions those wouldn't have meant anything. Rodz was around for about twenty years but never really accomplished anything. He was mainly a jobber to the midcard, which makes his induction all the more questionable. This is one of the top names that really has no business being enshrined.

Killer Kowalski

Now we're getting into something a bit better. Kowalski was one of the top heels in the world in the 60s and 70s and was a genuine monster. He was Sammartino's top opponent for years in the WWF and had a ton of success in regional promotions around the country. Kowalski was also the first man in North America to pin one Andre the Giant, which should tell you a lot about how big of a deal he was. He trained a bunch of people you've heard of too, with the most famous being HHH. This is another layup and definitely another guy you should look up if you never have before.

Pat Patterson

This is another guy that is more well known for his contributions rather than his in ring ability, which is saying a lot as he was very skilled in the ring. Patterson was of course the first Intercontinental Champion and held the title for a long time after first winning it. Other than that, he had an excellent match with Sgt. Slaughter in MSG known as an Alley Fight, which we would call a street fight. However, Patterson was much better behind the scenes as a consultant and agent. He invented the Royal Rumble and was a master at laying them out. If you watch the Rumble year to year, it's very obvious when Patterson is the one that laid it out as he knows how to create a three act structure for them. This is another layup, but not for reasons that most people would see.

Vincent J. McMahon

Aka Vince Senior, he's the father of the Vince McMahon we see on TV every now and then. Vince founded what would become the WWF and promoted cards for decades. That's more or less the main thing he's famous for, and if that doesn't get you into the WWE Hall of Fame, I don't know what else would. This is another easy yes.

Valiant Brothers

I forgot these guys when I first did this class. Basically they're an old school tag team that held the tag champions for awhile back in the 70s. There were three of them (Jerry, Johnny and Jimmy) and various combinations of them held the titles in the WWF. They were good, but as the first tag team in the Hall of Fame? I can't go with that. They're worthy of

the Hall of Fame, but not as the first team at all.

The class isn't that bad really, but at the same time it lacks the huge name that most classes have, leaving mainly questionable entries or people that don't have a lot of importance on camera in WWE.

That wraps up the first era of the WWE Hall of Fame and it's pretty easy to see why this went away for eight years: other than Andre, there aren't a lot of big names in there. We've got Pedro and Snuka, but other than that most of these guys just aren't huge names. Yeah they're big deals overall, but in WWE they weren't incredibly important. In every industry that has a Hall of Fame, there are certain names you have to have to make it credible. Most of those names are missing here and that's what brings the original classes down. That and there was almost no publicity for it at all, which hurt a lot. The modern era starts tomorrow.