

HIDDEN GEM: A Mere 70 Years Ago (And It's Good)

My dad wasn't born yet.

NWA World Title: Lou Thesz vs. Bill Longson

Date: June 17, 1952

Location: Sportatorium, Dallas, Texas

Longson is challenging and this is 2/3 falls. You might not have heard of Longson, but he was one of the first big time heels and is also credited with inventing the piledriver. No handshake from Longson of course because that's not his thing. They go with the grappling to start and Longson takes him to the mat without too much trouble. Back up and Thesz takes him down for a change into a headscissors.

That's broken up and catches Longson punching at what seems to be the thigh but might be a bit more of an illegal spot. Longson puts him down with a headlock takeover and then chokes in the corner with a boot. Back up Longson takes him to the mat with a top wristlock as Thesz is getting out technical here. Thesz has finally had enough of Longson's punches so he grabs a headlock for some shots of his own. Longson grabs a standing choke and pulls the hair, which is enough to make Thesz unload. The Thesz press gets the first fall at 7:57 and we take a break before the second.

Back with Longson slowing down a bit and trying for an armbar. Thesz takes him down by the leg so Longson goes to the rope in a hurry. Longson takes him down to pull on the leg and even unties Thesz's shoe, which has to be against some rule. Back up and Longson goes for the leg again, as commentary corrects himself by saying this is rasslin instead of wrestling. Longston grabs the rope with the leglock on and you can hear the fans freak out with each touch. See? It's really not that

hard.

The referee finally catches him and calls for the break, much to Longson's annoyance. A headlock takeover lets Longson hammer away so Thesz does the same, sending Longson jumping over the top to safety. Thesz dropkicks him off the apron and then does it again, only to bang himself up on the second. Longson comes back in and hits a piledriver for the second fall at 15:28. The third fall begins with Longson trying another piledriver but getting backdropped down. Thesz hits three straight dropkicks for the pin and the third fall to retain at 16:38.

Rating: B. This was a lot more interesting than you would have bet on as it was a rather simple story (Thesz is the technical master so Longson cheated, which sent Thesz over the edge so he won with better skill) but done so well. Thesz is someone who seems dull on paper but he makes it work so well in the ring that it's easy to see why he is so revered. Good stuff here, with Longson being a great heel and Thesz looking like the champ who was awakened by the end.

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