

WWF New York City House Show – August 28, 1978: Night of 1000 Rest Holds

WWF House Show

Date: August 28, 1978

Location: Madison Square Garden, New York City, New York

Commentator: Vince McMahon

So apparently this is a different show than I thought it was. The show is dated wrong and it's about a year after it was supposed to be. We're in the Backlund Era here and tonight he defends against former champion Ivan Koloff. Other than that we have Dusty Rhodes vs. Billy Graham and Andre in a six man tag. Let's get to it.

Stan Stasiak vs. Dominic DeNucci

Stasiak looks old and flabby. They trade some basic holds and it's a standoff. Stasiak hooks the arm but DeNucci makes the rope. Stan gets in a right hand to take over and it's into a front facelock. DeNucci cranks on the arm and bends it over his shoulder which the crowd is pleased with. Stasiak tries his Heart Punch but DeNucci ducks and goes right back to the arm.

We get a technical error as a graphic for the next match pops up on screen during an armbar. Stasiak kicks out of the armbar and is put right back into it, this time on the mat. Now Stasiak hooks the arm and uses the tights to keep DeNucci down. Dominic comes back and it's right back to an armbar to keep Stasiak in trouble. Stasiak finally bails to the floor to break up the monotony. Back in and Stan gets all fired up and pounds away but the Heart Punch is broken up again.

They fight over a full nelson and exchange control of it more than once

each. DeNucci finally says screw this and forearms Stasiak in the face. This match has time limit draw written all over it. They slug it out with Stasiak being staggered. Stasiak hooks a hammerlock and they slug it out some more. DeNucci hooks an abdominal stretch which he drops very quickly.

Stasiak elbows him in the face and both guys are down. Stan hits a cross body of all things for two and DeNucci does the same. I don't think he taught Foley to do that one. The third attempt at a Heart Punch is countered and DeNucci knocks him to the apron. DeNucci works on the hand which apparently was injured coming into this. Dominic hits him with a Heart Punch and then a second one which has Stasiak in trouble.

Stasiak finally hits the Heart Punch....and it has no effect after the hand wrap he had was taken off. Instead he punches Dominic in the face which only gets him tied up in the ropes. They trade punches again with DeNucci in far better shape than Stasiak is here. DeNucci punches him down again and covers but the time limit expires.

Rating: C-. The match was pretty boring but this was a match of the times. The arm work and the punching was pretty dull but the fans were into this which is the point of an opening match. Stasiak was pretty dull in the ring but to be fair it was like six years after he had lost the title in the first place. Not a very good match or anything but at the time it wouldn't have been horrible.

Baron Mikel Scicluna vs. Haystacks Calhoun

Calhoun is a big fat country boy while Baron is a European jerk. Baron pounds away on him but gets caught in the corner by the power of fat. Scicluna hammers away but Calhoun pounds him into the corner again. Off to a bearhug but Baron breaks it with a headbutt. Calhoun knocks him into the ropes and shakes him very hard. That's a new one.

Now Calhoun sits on the other rope so the referee can't untie him. Now

that's just not nice at all. He pokes Scicluna in the eyes but Baron comes back with some punches. Calhoun goes down and Baron uses a wide variety of stomps. The fat man comes back with some kicks and a back elbow to set up the splash for the pin.

Rating: D+. This was more fast paced but it wasn't anything more interesting. Calhoun was one of those fun characters that got the crowd going while Scicluna was one of those evil foreign heels that isn't really all that interesting. For some reason he's in the Hall of Fame though, which is one of the more questionable entries in there. The match wasn't terrible but the first thirty minutes of this show haven't done anything for me so far.

Special Delivery Jones vs. Victor Rivera

Rivera has Freddie Blassie with him so you know he's evil. He stalls a lot but gets in a cane shot to take over. Blassie leaves which I think was a rule of some kind back then. Jones gets knocked to the floor and Rivera stomps on him from inside. That goes on for a few minutes until Jones finally gets in a shoulder through the ropes. Rivera pops him in the ribs again to take over. Jones gets knocked to the floor again and the stalling continues.

He finally gets back in and knocks Rivera to the floor so the stalling can be reversed. We're over five minutes into this now and there might have been a minute of contact so far. Back in now and Rivera stomps away very slowly. Off to a nerve hold as this is going nowhere at all. Jones comes back with some elbows but gets pulled back to the mat. That works so well that they do it again. Jones comes back with a headbutt and dances a bit. A charge into the post misses though and Rivera wins with a suplex.

Rating: F. This was one of the most boring matches I have ever seen. When about nine minutes of a ten minute match are spent either in a nerve hold or stalling, there's no way you can call this a success of any kind. If

this match is any indication, I totally get why his match at WrestleMania went about 30 seconds. Horribly uninteresting match.

WWF World Title: Bob Backlund vs. Ivan Koloff

Bob is defending and Ivan has Albano with him. Backlund has only been champion about six months at this point. It's weird seeing Backlund being in his late 20s and looking even younger. The name graphic leaves the A out of Backlund's name. Backlund backdrops him to start as the crowd goes very silent for some reason. A headscissors puts Ivan down and Backlund holds on with a leg vice around Ivan's head. They go to the mat and Backlund bridges up in a nice power display.

Ivan puts him on the top rope but gets kicked away. Off to another standoff and it's test of strength time. Backlund goes down but comes back with a top wristlock, only to get caught in a headscissors. This goes on for a few minutes until Bob does a reverse nipup to escape. He dropkicks Ivan down and hooks a headscissors of his own as this is getting repetitive. Then again this is the way a lot of these matches went back then so this would be considered a big deal back then.

Backlund takes him back down again but gets caught in headscissors #4 of the night so far. Backlund finally gets out of that one as well and works on the knee a bit. Somehow we're over fifteen minutes into this despite almost nothing happening other than headscissors so far. Bob stays on the leg and hooks a hold on for a few minutes. That's another sign of the times: holds stay on FOREVER. I mean this one has been on for nearly four minutes at this point.

It finally gets broken up and Ivan suplexes him down for two. The idea of selling an injury must not have been invented yet. Or maybe it just doesn't translate into Russian. Ivan hooks a short arm scissors but you can't use that move on Bob Backlund, as in the guy that invented the counter that British Bulldog made famous on Shawn Michaels back in 1992.

Bob puts him on the top rope to counter and hooks something like a spinning toehold. Thankfully this one lasts less than the usual two hours with Ivan kicking him in the ribs. Ivan sends him into the ropes but they ram heads, sending Bob to the floor. Koloff is smart and breaks up the count so he can still win the title. Backlund gets rammed into the post and a backbreaker gets two.

Ivan goes up top for the biggest pop (and possibly the only one so far) of the match but his top rope knee drop misses. Backlund sends him in but gets kicked down again, this time back to the floor again. Koloff breaks up the count again, this time by going up top and jumping down onto the apron, kicking Bob in the head on the way down. That would be considered a big spot back then.

Backlund is busted open and we have to have the doctor look at it. That doesn't work so the fight continues. Backlund goes off as he is known to do and Ivan is in trouble. A backdrop puts the challenger down...and the match is stopped because of the cut. Trash fills the ring and I can't quite say I blame them for that.

Rating: C-. The ending was stupid but it had more to do with the athletic commission rather than the booking or anything. That being said, it made no sense to say Backlund can't continue when he was beating the tar out of Koloff but whatever. Also, this match was fairly boring as I was looking for things to talk about during those rest holds which went on forever. I know it's a different era, but that doesn't make it any less dull.

Backlund wants to keep going but Ivan walks away. The title doesn't change hands for some reason even though Ivan wins.

Luck Graham vs. Peter Maivia

Peter would of course be more famous for his grandson than anything he ever accomplished. Graham's nickname is either Crazy or Fabulous

depending on who you listen to. Peter is pretty short but he looks tough. Some bodybuilder is on commentary now with Vince. Feeling out process to start with no one having an advantage so far. Graham hooks the wrist for the first advantage of the match.

Vince criticizes Luke's physique but he doesn't own the company yet so it doesn't mean as much at the moment. The hold goes on for awhile as is the custom in the 70s. Maivia finally rakes the eyes to break the hold before firing off some right hands. I think Maivia is the face here but it's really not clear. Samoans tend to be evil but it would be weird to have a big monster like Luke against a tiny villain.

Peter hooks a nerve hold on Graham before punching him in the face again. Off to a bearhug as it does appear that Maivia is the bad guy here. Luke pokes Maivia in the throat to escape and both guys are down. Graham drops some slow motion ax handles onto the back of Maivia and they slug it out a bit. Peter chokes away as this match needs to end pretty soon. Maivia charges into a punch and Graham hits him in the throat again...and that's a DQ.

Rating: D. The match was boring already because someone decided to give this fourteen minutes, and then they gave us that lame ending. I still have no idea who I was supposed to like in there but I think it was Maivia. Either way this was a really uninteresting match and the fans didn't seem to care at all either.

Dusty Rhodes vs. Billy Graham

This is a Texas Bullrope match and it's pin or not being able to answer an 8 (yes 8) count. Jay Strongbow is referee for some reason. Graham doesn't want to be tied up so Strongbow grabs him and ties him up anyway. Graham keeps running and Dusty keeps pulling him in. The elbow to the head puts Graham down and he tries to run again. Another elbow stuns Graham but he rakes the eyes to get a break.

Dusty gets choked by the rope but Billy misses an elbow drop. The Dream is busted open and Graham hooks his bearhug. That doesn't last long for some reason so Billy goes up top. That's REALLY FREAKING STUPID in a bullrope match as Dusty pulls him down to the mat. Billy is busted too and Dusty pounds away. Apparently this is the rubber match in a series. Graham comes back but Strongbow breaks it up for some reason. Dusty elbows him in the head and that's enough for the 8 count and the win. That was a really abrupt ending.

Rating: C. This was fun while it lasted but unfortunately that wasn't too long. There's something cool about letting two guys beat the stuffing out of each other and that's what happened here. I still don't get what Strongbow had to do with this but maybe it was Graham's next feud. Dusty never did much in the WWF but he did enough elsewhere to make up for it.

Women's Title: Vicki Williams vs. Fabulous Moolah

Who do you think is defending? Moolah looks very different with black hair. Vicki whips her around by said hair to start and grabs an armbar. Moolah takes her down into a cross armbreaker but Vicki easily counters. That counter sequence goes on for awhile until Moolah says screw this wrestling nonsense and chokes away in the corner. Sunset flip gets two for Vicki. Moolah grabs a rollup out of nowhere for the pin.

Rating: D. Nothing to see here but that was common for the girls back then. Moolah held the title for about 20 years so it was pretty common to see her win here. Vicki was the challenger of the week for her so it's not like this match meant anything. Vicki probably trained her too.

The main event is one I've done from Best of the WWF Volume 14 so I'll just copy and paste it.

Spiros Arion/Yukon Lumberjacks vs. Andre the Giant/Tony Garea/Dino Bravo

This is from the late 70s. The Lumberjacks are the tag champions and named Eric and Pierre. We're in MSG here and this is 2/3 falls. Very international match here with three Canadians, a Frenchman, a Greek and a New Zealander. Vince is the lone commentator here and actually calls Andre Andre Roussimoff. Eric is the Lumberjack with blonde hair. Got it. He starts with Garea.

Two quick armdrags send Eric running to bring in Arion. I think we're clipped but I'm not sure. This is just punching. Off to Pierre, meaning Garea has fought all three guys now. Off to a top wristlock and I think the camera is just jumping around a lot. Either that or it's the best clipping I've ever seen. Eric comes in again and gets slammed. The heels finally get Tony into the corner but Andre breaks that up, drawing a DQ for the first fall. I forgot it was 2/3 so that bell was really surprising. Oh wait the Lumberjacks got disqualified for the triple teaming. Ok then.

Garea and Eric start the second fall as well. Bravo comes in for the first time and I've never seen him move that fast. Arion comes in and we get a crisscross. Bravo beats Eric up for awhile but Pierre comes in to take over. A slam gets two. Off to Andre and the place erupts. See, this is something you don't have in WWE anymore: an attraction. Andre was someone that was beloved and the people didn't care what he did.

Andre here is in the last match of the night (more brilliant booking. Why have him in the middle and let everyone leave after he's been in the ring? More beers and Cokes sold while people wait) and it's a worthless six man tag, but the people want to see him. It's not about some angle or the world title or whatever. It's about Andre and whatever he's doing. The people told the company what they wanted to see and that's who got the big spot. Not the other way around. Very key difference. As for the match, a splash ends it about 10 seconds after Andre comes in.

Rating: C-. The match was boring, but it's amazing to see

something like Andre when he was still young(ish) and could move. The crowd reacts to him and that's all it needs to be. He didn't have to spend ten minutes sucking up to them. He was cool and the fans reacted to it. What more did you need than that?

Overall Rating: D+. The best thing I can say about this is that I've seen worse. The 70s are just such a different time that it's hard for a modern fan to watch something like this and get into it. The wrestling wasn't that great here but it wasn't the worst ever. The ton of rest holds hurt things a lot and the crowd wasn't all that excited about a lot of this stuff. It really is amazing how much Hogan changed everything just a few years after this.

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