

PRO WRESTLING TORCH

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New Saturday night show to debut with live format

With later timeslot, WWF may attempt to push limits, but will they learn from the past?

HEADLINE ANALYSIS

By Wade Keller, Torch editor

History would indicate that the new Excess program that the WWF is debuting this Saturday night on TNN will not work. The program, which is scheduled to be a compilation highlight show with live transition segments featuring WWF wrestlers, isn't all that new. In fact, it's not nearly as ambitious as a Saturday night idea Vince McMahon had five years ago this week.

Five years ago, Vince McMahon green-lighted the idea to run weekly one hour PPVs on Saturday nights live from nightclubs at a price of \$9.95. While Excess is formatted to be a highlight show with some live guest interviews and viewer interaction, the weekly Saturday night PPV concept was going to be entirely live with first-run matches. The Aug. 24, 1996 TORCH reported:

The format of the weekly pay-per-view concept the WWF is pitching to cable companies is a one-hour show for \$9.95 Saturday nights at midnight. The time and day are flexible, but the idea is to have it late at night and to present it in a more adult-oriented tone, perhaps with more gimmick matches and brawling and some risqué elements—i.e. what ECW is known for.

At first McMahon was determined to offer the new PPV starting as soon as September—right after he was losing dozens of clearances for the top syndicated show at the time, Superstars. McMahon had decided to stop paying for syndicated timeslots since cable had become the primary vehicle for promoting house shows and PPVs. The idea was to shift an hour of their programming from a money-drain (Superstars) to

a money-generator (Shotgun Saturday PPVs.)

The cable industry didn't respond with open arms to McMahon's concept, delaying the launch date to the beginning of the next year. With limited PPV channels, Shotgun would often be preempted by bigger Saturday night events such as boxing, plus live concerts (which cable at the time hoped would grow into a big additional revenue source). There was also skepticism whether the WWF could offer a product that would draw enough interest to make it worth their while.

The WWF ultimately couldn't convince cable operators to go for the concept. The WWF begrudgingly shifted away from the PPV concept, but kept the rest of the format. The WWF offered the live one-hour Saturday night show for free via syndication. The show, titled "Shotgun Saturday Night," debuted Jan. 4, 1997 on nearly 20 affiliates live from the Mirage Nightclub in New York City.

After two luke-warm reviews for the show, plus major logistical headaches (they had to pull wrestlers from house shows and fly them to Shotgun events, plus wrestlers complained of the small ring used at the nightclubs), they cancelled the live format. Shotgun became just another pretaped syndicated show. They instead shifted their focus to an expanded Raw, which jumped from one hour to two hours the following month.

McMahon originally envisioned Shotgun being a forum with fewer rules than he was used to on USA Network. On PPV, he'd have more freedom to emulate the then-upstart ECW phenomenon. He felt limited by USA's programming restrictions, and having lost nearly 20 straight weeks in the Monday Night War at the time, he was looking for a place where he could push the envelope and try new concepts.

As the name implies, the new Excess program with the late night slot is another attempt to be a bit more edgy. However, nothing near the level of what McMahon wanted to do five years ago with Shotgun on PPV. Today McMahon will not be pushing the envelope nearly as much. The whole "WWF Attitude" campaign has been abandoned due to outside pressures to tone down the product. In fact, the Excess format may more closely resemble a new Saturday morning program the WWF also came up with five years ago—Livewire.

Like Livewire did at first, Excess will feature live in-studio guests (Triple H will make his first TV appearance since his injury on Excess) and fan interaction via the internet and perhaps phone calls. Livewire attempted a similar format, but it only lasted a few months. The live interactive format was dropped in January 1997, right before Raw expanded to two hours, after just a four month run.

The ratings were disappointing for the program.

Another element working against Excess succeeding today is the lackluster performance of MTV Heat. Since switching from USA to MTV last fall, Heat's ratings have dropped substantially. The USA format featured first-run matches and a traditional wrestling show format. The MTV format features less wrestling and more produced features (music videos, highlight reels, sit-down chats, etc.).

So far, there are no signs that Excess will be remarkably different than a mix of the weekend morning shows it replaces (Livewire and Superstars) and MTV's relatively poor performing Heat format.

The last thing the WWF needs is more first run programming watering down their product, as the pressure to deliver storylines to keep both Raw and Smackdown fresh is great enough. Had the WWF built up WCW to



Triple H (Photo by H. Adams)

be a sustainable separate entity, the new Saturday format could have been used as either WCW's primary program, or to augment the loss of Raw to WCW. Had Raw become a WCW program, the WWF would have lost its cable presence entirely. With a sizeable number of homes without UPN access, the new Saturday slot could have served to update Smackdown happenings for those without UPN access. With both Raw and Smackdown still WWF shows, Excess is going to have a difficult time finding a sizable niche. The format doesn't appear to hold much promise to draw viewers since the similar Livewire format failed years ago and the Heat format is performing poorly.

Although talk has cooled considerably, and storylines don't appear to be headed in that direction, McMahon continues to give indications that he'd like to promote two separate entities eventually. Excess could still end up being shifted into an Alliance (WCW/ECW) program, or become the WWF's primary cable show should Raw become an Alliance program.

Perhaps the WWF has a trick up their sleeve, something about the format that will hook viewers who have otherwise chosen to skip other highlight and interactive TV programs in the past.

If not, the WWF doesn't have a lot to lose, though, by attempting this new late Saturday program. The ratings for the morning shows it is replacing had dipped to record lows, often below 1.0. Excess should do better than that, plus draw an older demographic. It will help the WWF move away from the image of catering to kids, which could help during any future p.r. problems from so-called "wrestling deaths" of children. Excess also gives the WWF an opportunity to give a weekend evening push to its monthly PPVs.

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TOP ITEMS OF THE WEEK

•**The WWF announced that negotiations for a new distribution contract with DirecTV are no longer in progress.** During the SummerSlam broadcast, the WWF told viewers that its pay-per-views will no longer be available on the satellite network. "Based on the numbers that DirecTV has given me, 15 percent of the WWF's business comes from DirecTV," John Higgins of *Broadcasting and Cable* told the TORCH. Higgins also reports that DirecTV's vice president of programming acquisitions told him that there is an outstanding issue from the last deal in which DirecTV is seeking to recover money that it had accidentally paid the WWF. On June 17, apparently in regards to Higgins's report, WWF spokesperson Jayson Bernstein told the TORCH, "DirecTV has chosen the litigation path instead of the negotiating path." Higgins added that DirecTV officials offered to sign a new deal and submit the money dispute to an arbitrator. However, Higgins says the WWF balked at the offer and refused to continue negotiations until DirecTV dropped its financial claims against them.

•**DirecTV was reportedly flooded with phone calls and e-mails from concerned subscribers following the SummerSlam announcement.** In response, the company has been issuing the following e-mail to its subscribers: "Thank you for letting us know how important these events are to you. We are negotiating with the WWF so we can continue to make these events available to you. WWF Fanatic in September is not affected and will be available on DirecTV. The WWF event, Unforgiven, is scheduled for Sept. 23. By that time, we hope to have a contract that lets us continue to bring these events to you."

•**A cable industry source reports that despite most analysts assuming that the WWF was looking to increase its financial share of PPV revenues, it was actually DirecTV that was looking to increase its percentage during recent negotiations.** In most cases, cable companies claim 50 percent of revenue from pay-per-view events. Since most PPV companies use InDemand as their distributor, InDemand takes the other 50 percent of the money and eventually pays the WWF (or other PPV producer) their share of the earnings, while keeping a smaller percentage for themselves. Because DirecTV promotes its own events and is not affiliated with InDemand, company officials sought to collect not only their standard 50 percent, but also a small percentage similar to InDemand's take. The source said DirecTV has attempted, with little luck, to use this approach in other recent PPV negotiations.

•**The Aug. 13 Raw is War drew a 5.2 rating, the second consecutive ratings drop.** The show opened with a 4.9 first quarter hour rating, then hovered between 5.1 and 5.4 until quarter eight, which dropped to a 4.8 (likely due to containing two full commercial breaks and little content in between). The overrun rating jumped to a show-

high 5.4 rating for The Rock & Chris Jericho vs. Booker T & Rhyno match. Full quarter ratings were as follows: 4.9, 5.2, 5.1, 5.2; 5.4, 5.4, 5.1, 4.8; 5.4. The previous ten weeks of Raw have drawn the following ratings: 5.2 (last week); 5.4 (two weeks ago); 5.7 (the peak for the year); 5.4; 5.0; 4.7; 4.6; 4.7; 4.2; 4.1 (the low point of the year).

WWF NOTEBOOK

Sources say Vince McMahon wrote the final segment of this week's Raw, including the Austin tribute and Angle's milk attack. Sources also say McMahon has been more involved in the main event storylines now than at any time in recent months, spending a lot of one-on-one time with both Austin and Rock backstage... Triple H was backstage and attended production meetings at SummerSlam and Raw. He had skipped the previous few TV events in order to stay on course with his therapy. Triple H is off crutches now... There has been little if any talk in recent weeks about splitting the Alliance from the WWF. Sources believe that is still the long term plan but say management is in "no rush" to do so... The October WWF Fanatic Series PPV event is "Best of Raw, Volume 1" according to the InDemand website... There are a number of perspectives on Chris Jericho's performance at SummerSlam, especially as it relates to his two missed spots. Jericho claimed to have hit his head hard after getting Gored on the floor by Rhyno early in the match. Jericho was going to be sent home and miss Raw, but after test results came back the next day, he stayed for Raw anyway. Jericho blamed loose ropes for his missed spots, and a couple others backed up his claim. However, they were friends of his (Lance Storm), and others insisted the ropes were just fine and cited that nobody else had any trouble with the ropes. Jericho may have been embarrassed at his slip-ups and tried to cover by saying the ropes were loose, plus attribute his loss of balance to getting knocked silly early in the match. Jericho skipped the post-PPV production meeting. He's been attending all production meetings recently... Stephanie McMahon did not suggest the idea for Chris Jericho to mock her breast implant surgery on last week's Raw. However, when the idea was brought up in a semi-joking manner, Steph said she would be happy to go along with the angle if the other writers believed it would help Jericho. "She's a great sport," said one of Steph's co-workers. In fact, she is so gung-ho about her role, she wanted to take a spear from Rhyno at SummerSlam, but Triple H had to pull her aside and talk her out of it...

One source says the Rock's Hollywood career has not changed him. The source said Rock does not have his own dressing room, nor does anyone else. "He plays the game like a top guy should," the source said... Shane McMahon doesn't come up with very many storyline ideas, but generally tweaks ideas that have already been established. Sometimes he can be a bit overzealous. He actually suggested that Page take the Last Ride off the top of the cage at SummerSlam... As one might expect, there has been little, if any, talk within management about John Collins and MECW. That said, the

feeling is that wrestlers who work for MECW will likely hurt their chances of being hired by the WWF. WWF officials believe the company would shy away from MECW talent in an attempt to avoid criticism that they would be "raiding MECW" as if they were taking their presence seriously. "A lot of people are going to get burned," one WWF official predicted of MECW... Some members of WWF management say they will try to sway Vince McMahon against hiring Kevin Nash in January due to his history of manipulative games and poor work ethic, but they don't believe they will have much luck since McMahon is still enthralled with Nash's size and has remained friends with him since he left the WWF five years ago... There hasn't been any talk of using Shawn Michaels in an on-air role. Michaels, in a recent appearance for the WWF promoting a house show, told media he didn't want to return to the ring. WWF sources say it's not exactly Michaels's choice. They don't see him as reliable and won't risk investing in him because of it...

Steve Austin's ongoing "What?" bit wasn't created as much as "it just happened," according to one source. Apparently, Austin asked the question during a promo and it clicked with the writers, who now encourage him to use it... The writers feel that the Molly Holly and Spike Dudley relationship angle has run its course and are looking for a way to break the couple up. Don't expect Molly to turn heel though, as WWF officials don't believe she would be good in that role. Spike is still in good standing with the WWF, especially after volunteering to stay on the road while recovering from his leg injury... There is talk that Sara will not be used on television once the Undertaker vs. Dallas Page angle plays out... One source reports that Tazz was pulled from house show appearances "because his work sucked." Tazz continues to frustrate WWF officials by constantly complaining about various issues. "He is 50 times worse than (Dallas) Page. Tazz is a miserable, complaining, whining bitch," one source said. Those familiar with Tazz from his days in ECW say his attitude is actually worse now than it was back in those days... The ladder match stipulation was added to the Jeff Hardy vs. Rob Van Dam PPV match simply because the WWF felt it would "draw better." The feeling among WWF brass after the match was that it showed off both the strengths and weaknesses of Van Dam. Overall, they weren't happy with the match compared to other ladder matches. Van Dam knows the criticism of his style, but chooses not to change because he really enjoys working the way he does... The general consensus in the locker room is that Chuck Palumbo is a better wrestler than Sean O'Haire and is likely to become a star in the future. O'Haire is seen as having some timing issues that perhaps no amount of teaching or practice can fix... A source at Raw reports that despite internet rumors, there is no talk of Dallas Page being fired. The

—Please see WWF NEWSWIRE, pg. 5

8/16 Live from Salt Lake City, Utah.—W.K.

Hosts: Michael Cole and Paul Heyman... The show started with a new opening montage... The announcers introduced the show as the cameras focused on the new entrance set, which is a three-dimensional fist punching threw a glass set above the entry way with video screens on both sides of it. Impressive, but perhaps bordering on gaudy... Shane McMahon walked to the ring and introduced Booker T. Booker walked out and cut a promo in which he used the Rock's catch-phrases and referred to himself as "The Book"... After a commercial break, Rock walked to the ring and called out Booker. Booker walked out and listened as Rock insulted him. Shawn Stasiak raced to the ring and charged at Rock...

(1) Rock beat Shawn Stasiak in a squash match.

Once Stasiak entered the ring, the bell rang and a ref entered the ring. Rock gave Stasiak the Rock Bottom and pinned him while Booker and Shane watched from the entrance ramp. Rock challenged Booker to a lights out match for later in the show...

(2) X-Pac & Albert beat William Regal & Tajiri.

In the end, Albert hit the Baldo Bomb on Tajiri for the win... Backstage, Steve Austin and Debra discussed the "Austin Invitational." Dave Hebner walked into the room and Austin instructed him to find WWF wrestlers interested in taking part in "Stone Cold University"... Inside the WWF locker room, Hebner asked wrestlers to sign up for the Austin Invitational. Kurt Angle insisted he be the first wrestler to sign Austin's list... Backstage, Christian accused Edge of being selfish for wanting to be part of the Austin Invitational... Backstage, Austin told Debra he planned to work with the first person who signed up to be part of his class. Hebner entered the room and showed Austin that Angle had been the first to sign... Tazz joined the announcers at ringside and complained about Austin attacking him on Raw... Austin walked to the ring and called out Scotty Too Hotty, whom he claimed was the first wrestler to sign up. Austin cut an intense promo on Scotty, calling him "Kurt" throughout. Eventually, Austin attacked Scotty. Angle ran out for the save, but Tazz ran in and attacked him. The Hollys ran out for the save, causing Austin and Tazz to flee through the crowd... Backstage, Jonathan Coachman interviewed Angle, who challenged Tazz to a match for later in the show...

(3) Rob Van Dam & Rhyno (w/Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley) beat Matt Hardy & Chris Jericho. Five minutes into the match it broke down into a four-way brawl. In the end, Van Dam hit a Frog Splash on Hardy for the win... Backstage, Jeff Hardy told Matt and Lita that his SummerSlam match against Van Dam would be a ladder match...

(4) Dallas Page & Kanyon beat Edge & Christian when Lance Storm interfered. Late in the match, Storm ran out and stopped E&C from hitting Kanyon with a Conchairto. Moments later, Page used the Diamond Cutter on Edge for the win... Backstage, Coachman interviewed Undertaker, Kane, and Sara... At WWF New York, the Acolytes cut a promo... Backstage, Tazz cut a promo hyping his match with Angle...

(5) Kurt Angle beat Tazz. Before the match, the Dudleys, Test, Sean O'Haire, and Chuck Palumbo walked to the ring and stood in Tazz's corner. Moments later, Taker, Kane, Albert, Big Show, and Billy Gunn walked out and stood in Angle's corner. Later, Austin walked onto the stage to watch the match. In the end, Tazz went for his finisher, but Angle countered with the Olympic Slam for the win. Austin charged the ring, but Angle caught him in an ankle lock...

(6) Booker T (w/Shane McMahon) fought The Rock to a no-contest in a lights out match. The ring announcer hyped the match as "the first ever lights out match." Late in the match, Rock and Booker brawled to ringside where Rock prepared to Rock Bottom Booker through the announcers' table. Before Rock could hit the move, Shane low-blowed him. Booker took advantage of the interference and used the Rock Bottom to put Rock through the announcers' table. Cole complained that Booker was using the Rock Bottom, but Heyman told him that the move is actually called The Bookend...

8/20 Live from Sacramento, Calif.—J.P.

•Overall score (5.0): A rough follow up to SummerSlam, but the final minutes of the show made it tolerable. For viewers who didn't like the final segment, the show must have been two hours of misery.

•High Point: Obviously, the final segment of the show which contained the Austin Appreciation Night celebration and Kurt Angle's milk truck angle. There wasn't much to the show in terms of wrestling or storyline progress, but the final segment was filled with great comedy.

•Low Point: As funny as the aforementioned segments were, Rock's skit with Little Booker T was awful. In fact, it would have to rank as the worst segment Rock has been a part of since his days with the Nation of Domination.

•Review of the Show: [Q1]... Hosts: Jim Ross and Paul Heyman... Highlights aired from earlier in the day of Steve Austin and Debra arriving at the building. Once inside, the couple was greeted by The Alliance wrestlers, who applauded Austin for retaining the WWF Title. Austin referred to the gathering as "Steve Austin Appreciation Night"... The opening montage aired... The announcers introduced the show and hyped it as Austin Appreciation Night... (1) Lita & Jackie & Molly Holly beat Stacy Keibler & Torrie Wilson at 3:41. Before the match, Ross pointed out that Lita was still limping as a result of her SummerSlam "injury." In the end, Jackie pinned Ivory... [C] Backstage, the Dudleys and Test celebrated their PPV win and agreed to team together again. Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley entered the room as the Dudleys exited. Steph acknowledged that she and Test had problems in the past, but said she thought they could work through them because "we're older now." Test called Steph a bitch but said that is what he likes about her. At Steph's request, Test agreed to wrestle Chris Jericho later in the show...

[Q2]... Rock walked to the ring for a promo and talked about beating Booker T at the PPV. Rock called Booker to the ring, saying he might be able to make him feel better about losing. Booker's music played, but a midjet impersonator walked out instead. "Little Booker" joined Rock in the ring. Rock asked him how he felt after losing the PPV match. "How do you think I feel sucka?" asked Little Booker. Rock asked Little Booker to perform the Spinarooni for him. After Little Booker complied, Rock asked him to do the moonwalk and running man dance moves, then had him perform the Deion Sanders touchdown dance. After the segment painfully continued for several minutes, Lance Storm walked to the ring. Storm complained about Rock mocking Booker T and challenged him to a match. Rock agreed to the match and then engaged in a brief staredown with Storm. After backing up, Storm superkicked Little Booker and left the ring... [C]

[Q3]... (2) Big Show & Scotty Too Hotty & Billy Gunn & APA & Spike Dudley beat The Dudleys & Hugh Morrus & Sean O'Haire & Chuck Palumbo & Tommy Dreamer at 5:26. Late in the match, the wrestlers took turns hitting their finishers on one another until Show chokeslammed Dreamer for the pin. By the way, Dreamer's new pants are actually worse than his ECW pants... Shane Helms cut a "Stone Cold Tribute" promo while wearing a Green Lantern t-shirt... [C]

[Q4]... (3) Test (w/Steph) beat Chris Jericho at 2:33. At 2:00, Jericho grabbed Steph which led to Rhyno running out to stop him. Jericho got the better of Rhyno only to receive the Big Boot finisher from Test... [C] Backstage, Christian told Edge he planned to win the WWF European Title... Highlights aired of Shawn Stasiak trying several times to cut his "Stone Cold Tribute" interview. The joke was that he stumbled over his words so many times that the director gave up counting the number of takes it took... Ross interviewed Mick Foley from WWF New York. Foley put over Kurt Angle in a forgettable interview... [C] The announcers hyped WWF Excess for Saturday night...

[Q5]... (4) The Rock beat Lance Storm at 3:10 with the Rock Bottom. Basically, a squash match. Afterward, Little Booker ran out and tried to hit the People's Elbow on Storm, but tripped while trying to hop over him. Little Booker hit the move in his second attempt, which actually received a mild pop from the crowd... [C] Highlights aired of Saturn's attempts to locate Moppy... (5) Matt Hardy (w/Lita) beat Christian at 2:38 to retain the WWF

European Title. Late in the match, Christian hit a reverse DDT for a believable nearfall. Moments later, Matt came back with the Twist of Fate for the win... Still shot photos aired from SummerSlam of Austin vs. Angle...

[Q6]... A shot aired of Booker T walking into the building. As Booker walked, he passed several backstage crew members who laughed at him... [C] Backstage, Michael Cole interviewed Dallas Page regarding his match against Sara. Page claimed that Sara suggested they wrestle one another because "she wants to feel her body up against mine"... Tazz's tribute to Austin aired. Tazz credited Austin for "bringing back the old Tazz." He must have been talking about the whining Tazz that disrupted the ECW locker room because that Tazz has definitely been showing his face lately... Inside William Regal's office, Booker T complained about the crew members who laughed at him. While laughing, Regal broke the news to Booker about Rock's parody of him. Tajiri said something to upset Booker, which led to Regal setting up a match between the two... [C]

[Q7]... (6) Tajiri beat Booker T by DQ at 2:42. Booker came to the ring wearing his street clothes. He removed his dress shirt for the match. Booker dominated the encounter, but got upset and pushed WCW ref Charles Robinson, who disqualified him. Does that mean that Nick Patrick is the only heel WCW ref?... Backstage, Undertaker and Sara discussed her match with Page... [C] (7) Sara (w/Undertaker) beat Dallas Page at 0:06. Before the match, Page told Sara to take the first shot. Sara slapped him. Page asked for another and Sara complied. Page shoved her to the mat, which upset Taker (since pushing someone to the ground is obviously illegal during a wrestling match). Taker pulled Page outside the ring and attacked him. Taker chokeslammed Page and shoved him back inside the ring. Sara covered Page for the win... Backstage, Debra and Steph led the Alliance members toward the arena entrance...

[Q8]... [C] Debra and Steph led the Alliance members to the ring for the Austin appreciation celebration. Debra and Steph entered the ring while the other members surrounded it. Heyman joined the crew inside the ring and hosted the segment. Helms entered the ring and said Green Lantern used to be his hero until he met Austin. Kanyon entered the ring and said that Austin is better than him. Debra presented Austin with a tray of her famous cookies. Heyman spared Austin from having to eat the cookies by introducing a video tribute to him.

[Q9]... After the video aired on TitanTron, Steph asked the remaining Alliance members to join them in the ring. Steph announced that the group had written a song about Austin called "Wind Beneath Our Ring." to the tune of Bette Midler's "Wind Beneath My Wings." Steph invited Lillian Garcia into the ring to sing the song. Steph instructed Lillian to read the lyrics as they appeared on TitanTron. Hilariously, a bouncing image of Austin's head appeared over the lyrics. Garcia started to sing the song, but Steph cut her off. Steph told Garcia that they needed someone who could put some emotion into the song, deciding that she would do it herself. Steph screeched the lyrics while the Alliance members sang and swayed in the background. Steph passed the mic to various Alliance members who took turns singing the song. Austin stood in front of the group and smiled as the Alliance sang in his honor. Once the song was over, Austin took the mic and thanked the Alliance. Austin pointed out that the Alliance members were all wearing his t-shirt except for Tazz. Austin started to chew out Tazz and demanded that he take off his shirt, but Angle's music interrupted him. Angle drove a milk truck to ringside (a la' the classic Austin beer truck angle). Angle climbed out of the truck and threw cartons of milk at the Alliance. Stasiak charged toward Angle at ringside, but Angle sidestepped him and then poured milk onto him. Angle pulled a hose from the truck and sprayed the Alliance with milk (also a la' Austin's beer truck angle). Angle climbed onto the top of the truck and began slamming cartons of milk. Austin stood in the ring with a "What the hell are you doing?" look on his face. Angle continued to slam cartons of milk as the show went off the air...

TOP ITEMS OF THE WEEK

•**Chris Adams commented on the manslaughter charges he is facing in connection with the death of his girlfriend.** As previously reported, Adams, 46, faces manslaughter charges relating to the death of his girlfriend, Linda Kaphengst, who died after ingesting GHB and alcohol with Adams in April 2000. Adams is currently free on \$25,000 bail and is expected to enter a not guilty plea during his next court appearance, which is scheduled for Aug. 30.

"It was the worst thing that's ever happened in my life," Adams told the *Fort Worth Star Telegram*. "I don't think I will ever forget it... I can't imagine how her parents feel. I have three children myself and it must be awful."

Adams's lawyer, David J. Pire, questioned the charges. "If it was a reckless act in April 2000, it would make sense to arrest him that day and make him post a bond," he said. Adams added: "I feel guilty, but I just don't think I'm guilty of what they are accusing me of. It was a tragic mistake."

Brent Parnell, a friend of Adams, recalled the night Kaphengst died. "They were laughing and they had this little dog from Taco Bell," said Parnell. "If you squeezed it, it said something. She couldn't hardly talk for laughing... They were loving each other, so I decided to let them have their good time." Parnell said that the next time he checked on the couple, both were unconscious. "I couldn't wake them up at all," he added." The couple was rushed to the hospital where Kaphengst died 12 hours after arriving. "I wanted to die and be with Linda, but there was this little thing in my mind saying, 'You have children. You can't leave them,'" Adams said.

ETC. NOTEBOOK

The WWF's newest developmental territory, Heartland Wrestling Association, has been cleared for television on the Fox affiliate (Ch. 45) in Dayton, Oh. The group is also negotiating with the WB Network affiliate (Ch. 25) in Cincinnati... Les Thatcher has been telling friends that the WWF is letting him make the call on whether to continue promoting future Brian Pillman Memorial events. Thatcher is saying that he wants to continue promoting the shows, but will likely hold next year's event in May instead of August. As reported last week, the WWF would prefer to hold an annual house show in the Cincinnati area and donate some of the proceeds to Pillman's family... Tod Gordon announced that he has officially accepted a position in MECW management. Gordon founded ECW and initiated its hardcore style (following in the footsteps, to a degree, of Joel Goodhart's Tri-States Wrestling Alliance which ran in the market before ECW), and originally hired the late Eddie Gilbert as his booker. Heyman succeeded Gilbert and years later purchased ECW from Gordon. Gordon, who operates a jewelry pawn shop full-time, is now interested in promoting again... Sources say Sid Eudy (Vicious) filed a lawsuit against AOL Time Warner regarding the severe leg injury he suffered

during his final Nitro appearance. Regarding the lawsuit, one source cracked, "Sid should be suing his wrestling teacher." The legal case Sid makes will likely center around his claims that he balked at the top rope move due to the danger of someone his size executing the leap, but he was instructed by management to do the move anyway... A key source tells PWTorch.com that Vince Russo is being paid \$20,000 per month to book the Australian tour that has been discussed in recent issues. Russo is said to be paying Jeremy Borash a small percentage of that money to do the "grunt work"... Sources say Russo recently tried to convince Konnan to back out of his plans to work Sonny Onoo's Wrestle Express tour. Konnan tells the TORCH that he is aware of the story, but says he does not believe Russo was out to interfere with the Wrestle Express event. In fact, Konnan says Russo gave him permission to join the Australian tour late so that he could fulfill his obligations to Wrestle Express. Although Russo is claiming that the tour has been rescheduled for an earlier date than he originally told the wrestlers, some in Onoo's camp believe Russo is attempting to sabotage Onoo. The Onoo camp alleges that Russo is upset that Onoo has spoken out so strongly against Russo and made him the focal point of his lawsuit against Time Warner. Russo's Australian tour is now set to begin Oct. 19. Advertised names include Buff Bagwell, Sid Vicious, Jeff Jarrett, Stevie Ray, Juventud Guerrera, Psicosis, The Harris Boys, and Vito LaGrasso, although some of those names have only tentatively agreed to the tour, but have not received paperwork nor confirmed their appearance fees. The group is said to be interested in also hiring Ken Shamrock for the tour... Correction: Last week's MECW results incorrectly stated that New Jack beat Vito LaGrasso in the opening match. Tony DeVito of the Baldies was New Jack's opponent... Best wishes to longtime TORCH correspondent Bruce Grummert as he recovers from back surgery... Scott Hall now has custody of his children. The children's mother has visitation rights...

JAPAN HIGHLIGHTS

New Japan: Aug. 12 in Tokyo at Sumo Hall, Yuji Nagata beat Keiji Muto at 22:03 with the Nagatalock to win the G1 Climax tournament. Also on the card, Akira beat Wataru Inoue, El Samurai & Minoru Tanaka beat Masayoshi Naruse & Jushin Liger, Kenzo Susuki & Riki Choshu beat Shinya Makabe & Yutaka Yoshie, Tatsutoshi Goto & Masa Chono beat Shiro Koshinaka & Osamu Nishimura, and Hiroyoshi Tenzan & Satoshi Kojima beat Tadao Yasuda & Manabu Nakanishi.

A G1 World Tournament will be held Sept. 7-23 featuring Scott Norton, Scott Hall, Giant Silva (formerly of the WWF Oddities), Brian Johnston, and Super J. Bam Bam Bigelow cancelled the tour. Sept. 23 at the Namihaya Dome will feature Nagata, the G1 Japan winner, against the winner of the G1 World tourney.

Aug. 19 in Sendai, Keiji Muto wrestled as "Black Angel" teaming with "White Angel" Hakushi (Jinsei Shinzaki) to defeat Hiro Saito & Tatsutoshi Goto.

Notebook: The IWA Japan promotion for which Terry Gordy worked held a Gordy Memorial Event the same day as the Birmingham, Ala. Gordy Memorial Event. On the IWA events, Pogo beat Abe and Doug Gilbert & Leatherface & Keizo Matsuda beat Ryo Miake & Yuji & Ichinomiya...

ON THE ROAD

Midwest Championship Wrestling (promoter Brian Zenner): Aug. 5 in Chicago, Ill.: Vinnie Massaro beat Synn, Chad Collyer beat Jay Jensen, Jeffro King beat Brett Sanders, Low-Ki & Jayson Reign beat **Christian York & Joey Mathews**, **Kevin Quinn** beat Magnificent Mike, **Chris Chetti** beat Donovan Morgan to win the vacant MCW TV Title, **Simon Diamond** beat **Mike Modest**, Acid beat Vic Capri in a retirement/tables match to win the MCW Title.

USA Wrestling: Aug. 18 in Nashville, Tenn.: Jeff Daniels & Tim Renesto beat Steve Lane & Chris Gatlin, Kevin White beat Bully Douglas, Barry Houston beat Outlaw Lover, Heinrich Von Keller & **Ashley Hudson** beat **Joey York & Christian Mathews**, Mike Rapada beat **Bill Dundee**, **Bart Sawyer** & Bully Douglas beat **Stan Lane** & Kory Williams, Ashley Hudson beat **Jimmy Valiant**, **Brian Christopher** beat **Doug Gilbert**, James Storm beat Rick Michaels in a ladder match.

All Pro Wrestling: Aug. 18 in Vallejo, Calif.: Sean Patrick beat Pete Snott, Giant Singh beat Billy Bricks & Tommy Blaze in a handicapped match, Maxx Justice beat Navajo Warrior, Frankie Kazarian & Jardi Frantz beat Robert Thompson & Tony Jones, The Ballard Brothers beat Samoa Joe & Keiji Sakoda to retain the APW Tag Titles, Donovan Morgan beat Vince Massaro to retain the internet title, **Mike Modest** beat Bison Smith to retain the APW Universal Title.

Steel Domain Wrestling (promoter Ed Hellier): Aug. 18 in West St. Paul, Minn. at the Armory: Superbrat Brad Bradley beat "Rapid Delivery" Rory Fox, Hellraiser Blood & Cpl. Punishment beat Lost Souls, Ace Steel beat Horace the Psychopath, Danny Dominion beat Tony DeNucci to retain the SDW Title, Rikki Noga beat Adrian Lynch, C.M. Punk beat Colt Cabana to retain the SDW TV Title in a best of three falls match. **Jerry Lynn** attended the show and visited friends backstage. [Chris Vetter]

All South Too Extreme Wrestling: Aug. 15 in Kinnisaw, Ga.: Nemesis beat Psycho Kid, Bruce Biggins beat Alexander the Great to retain the U.S. Title in a best of three falls match, Scott Prader beat Jerry Lewis, Blues Brother beat Lee Thomas, Jeff Wade & Danny Rose beat John Dalton & Canadian Sheik. Return date: Aug. 29. [David Wells]

Ohio Valley Wrestling: Aug. 15 in Louisville, Ky. (taped for TV): Nick Dinsmore beat Mike Hard in a loser leaves OVW match, **Randy Orton** beat Mr. Black, Jason Lee beat **David Flair**, Rico Constantino & Prototype (w/Kenny Bolin, Jerome Crony) beat Payne & Damien (w/Synn, Connie Swail). [Aaron Wilson]

Heartland Wrestling Association: Aug. 14 in Cincinnati, Oh.: Chad Collyer beat Bo Lewis, **Shark Boy** beat Crypt, **The Island Boys** beat Bennie the Bookie & Alex Pettu, **Lance Cade** & Cody Hawk beat Dark Meat Gotti & Suicide Bo, **Steve Bradley** beat Tony B, Ash Parker & Timebomb beat **Evan Karagias & Shannon Moore** by DQ, Race Steele beat Nigel McGuinness, Matt Stryker beat Pepper Parks by DQ, **The Haas Brothers** beat The Jablonski Brothers. [Bolded names include WWF developmental wrestlers]

WWF NEWSWIRE continued from pg. 2

source believes the main reason Page was squashed on Raw was that he is nursing an injury and couldn't work much anyway... Last week's Ross Report highlights: Kane has been working through a back injury. He had an MRI exam on Aug. 14. Jerry Lynn will have surgery on Aug. 23 to repair a torn patella tendon. Lynn is expected to be out for three months. Doctors told Rikishi that he is still two months away from returning following the shoulder injury he suffered a few months back. Raven, Steven Richards, and Mike Sanders have received announcing tryouts in recent weeks... Lynn, by the way, was bummed out that his knee injury came right after his outstanding match against Rob Van Dam that aired on Heat two weeks ago. Lynn was hoping that match would give him a boost in the eyes of management. Instead, the production team cut several minutes out of the match, and most of what was cut was Lynn's offense, which sent a message to Lynn as far as where he stands in management's eyes. "He's used to it by now," says one friend of Lynn... Wrestlers report that there were very few complaints about having to appear at Smackdown on Thursday, which is normally an off day. Instead, the wrestlers were given Tuesday and Thursday off, while many members of management remained in California from Tuesday until after Monday's Raw. There were complaints, though, once Smackdown took place by the wrestlers who weren't used. They wish the WWF had planned ahead so they could have had the days off rather than pointlessly being flown in on a typical off-day and then not used...

Rey Mysterio Jr. and Juventud Guerrera were backstage at the Aug. 7 Smackdown tapings in Los Angeles, Calif. Mysterio had scheduled a meeting with Jim Ross and brought Guerrera along with him. Guerrera was welcomed into the meeting with Ross and agent Johnny Ace. Ross advised Mysterio to continue collecting the remainder of his guaranteed money from AOL Time Warner until his contract expires in January. Ross made it sound like both wrestlers will be considered for employment around that time, but offered no guarantees. Rey's website now points to WCW.com, signalling his signing may be a virtual lock... Rock is no longer upset with Guerrera for imitating him on WCW television. A source reports that Rock and Juvi actually met at an airport several months ago and engaged in a friendly conversation. "There is no way you can be mad at Juvi once you meet him," noted one wrestler... The following matches aired on the Aug. 18 syndicated Jakked show: Scotty Too Hotty beat Crash Holly, Mike Awesome beat K-Kwik, Hardcore Holly beat Hugh Morrus, Shawn Stasiak & Hurricane Helms beat Kaientai, and Chavo Guerrero Jr. beat Essa Rios. In a dark match held prior to the Aug. 13 Raw, Michael Shane beat Race Steele... In matches held prior to the Aug. 20 Raw, Saturn beat Taka Michinoku, Crash Holly beat Sho Funaki, and Raven beat Essa Rios [Julia Shaw]... In the Aug. 11 *Billboard*, nine WWF videos placed in the top 20 for sales for the week in the Recreational Sports category. NHL 2001 Finals and NBA 2001 Finals held the top two spots, followed by the WWF Lita video at no. 3 in its fourth week on the charts. *WrestleMania X-7* came in no. 4. No ECW

videos were on the chart... In the Aug. 25 *Billboard*, the WWF held ten of the top 20 spots. Lita finished no. 3 for the third straight week, behind the NHL and NBA finals tapes, down from its peak at no. 2 four weeks ago. Best of Raw, Vol. 3, debuted at no. 4. WWF King of the Ring, in its second week on the chart, finished 5, down from its debut at no. 2...

There were a number of finishes considered for the Austin-Angle match at SummerSlam, and spirited debate about which finish to go with, but they all involved Austin ending up retaining the title. Pat Patterson talked Vince McMahon into going with the finish they used. Paul Heyman pushed for a blood stoppage finish due to heavy bleeding by Angle. "Vince may disagree with Paul sometimes not because his ideas are bad, but just to keep Paul's power in check right now," says one WWF source... There was some heat on Nick Patrick for underacting during his call of the Austin-Angle finish, but it's one of those can't-win situations since he has been talked to about his overacting in previous weeks... Booker's leg was feeling good enough at SummerSlam that it wasn't a factor in how the match was booked... WWF management had a big discussion about making near falls more dramatic late in matches by making them intentionally less dramatic late in matches. Road agents are supposed to encourage wrestlers to kick out right away early in the match so later in the match two counts are more dramatic. Edge and Lance Storm noticeably employed that practice in their SummerSlam match... Regarding Van Dam's impressive locker room conduct lately, one long-time colleague says: "He's a naturally cocky individual, but he knows he has to act humble in order to get along in the WWF locker room so that's what he's doing now, but it's not genuine. Maybe, by acting humble, he'll realize it's the right approach to take and after a while he won't be faking it anymore"... WCW ref Billy Silverman has heat on him for violating one of those pesky unwritten WWF locker room rules. He has been upgrading his flights to first class, which is a no-no even if you want to spend the money unless you're a top guy. It looks bad when even Kurt Angle doesn't feel he's at the stature yet in terms of years of service to sit first class all the time, yet WCW ref Silverman is doing it. Undertaker, Triple H, Steve Austin, and Rock are first class regulars. X-Pac is also due to years of service and respect among management, as opposed to having main event status. Big Show has first class tickets as part of his WWF contract, although that's more due to his size than any other factor... Heyman and Ross often get into verbal spats backstage and clearly don't like each other, but overall handle the tension professionally. "Neither will give in to the other on anything," says one source... WWF developmental wrestler Brock Lesnar suffered a PCL tear in his knee. He will be back in action in early September. He returned home to Minneapolis for a few weeks while recovering...

ON THE ROAD

Aug. 16 in Salt Lake City, Ut. for Smackdown drew 7,990 paid sellout for \$274,440 (\$76,707 merch., \$9 per cap). Taped for UK Heat: Raven & Justin Credible beat Kaientai, Saturn beat Hurricane Helms, and Hugh Morrus beat Spike Dudley (w/Molly Holly).

Aug. 17 in Las Vegas, Nev. drew: William Regal beat Justin Credible, Lance Storm beat Edge to retain the WWF Intercontinental Title, Jeff Hardy beat Rob Van Dam to

retain the WWF Hardcore Title, Chris Jericho beat Rhyno, Big Show & Billy Gunn & Albert & Scotty Too Hotty & Crash Holly & Hardcore Holly beat Tommy Dreamer & Sean O'Haire & Chuck Palumbo & Hugh Morrus & Shawn Stasiak & Mike Awesome, Matt Hardy & Lita beat Hurricane Helms & Lita, APA & Spike Dudley beat The Dudleys & Test, X-Pac beat Tajiri in a non-title match, Undertaker & Kane beat Dallas Page & Kanyon.

Aug. 18 in Fresno, Calif. drew 8,346 paid for \$250,625 (\$67,316 merch., \$8 per cap): In the opener, Jeff Hardy beat Rob Van Dam to retain the WWF Hardcore Title. Hardy wrestled with that damn hat on again. Van Dam was impressive while playing the cocky heel. In the end, Hardy scored the pin with an inside cradle. Matt Hardy & Lita beat Hurricane Helms & Ivory. Looked like the Hardys wanted to get out of town a little early since they worked the first two matches. Helms looked like a high school senior standing next to Ivory, who looked like his mom. William Regal beat Justin Credible. Neither wrestler received much of a crowd reaction. In the end, Regal hit a European Neckbreaker for the win. Chris Jericho beat Rhyno with the Walls of Jericho. Steve Austin beat Kurt Angle to retain the WWF Title. Austin stalled for the first 15 minutes of the match, much like a Larry Zbyszko match. In the end, Austin pinned Angle while holding his tights. After intermission, Kanyon beat Christian. Neither wrestler received much attention from the crowd. X-Pac beat Tajiri in a non-title match. A great match that X-Pac won after a Bronco Buster. Lance Storm beat Edge when Christian's interference backfired. After the match, E&C teased a breakup, but eventually hugged and left the ring together. Big Show & Billy Gunn & Spike Dudley & Molly Holly & Crash Holly & Hardcore Holly & Scotty Too Hotty beat Tommy Dreamer & Hugh Morrus & Mike Awesome & Shawn Stasiak & Test & Chuck Palumbo & Sean O'Haire in a 14-man tag match. The match was better than it had any right to be. In fact, it might have been the most fun I have had watching a live match in 15 years. There was a lot of comedy and quick tags. Late in the match, there was a very hot sequence in which all of the wrestlers took turns hitting their finisher. In the end, Big Show chokeslammed Dreamer and scored the pin. After the match, Billy Gunn walked backstage while the WWF team celebrated. It didn't come off like an angle, though. [T.D.M.]

Aug. 18 in Las Vegas, Nev. drew 5,469 paid for \$206,416 (\$53,899 merch., \$9 per cap):

Aug. 19 in San Jose, Calif. for SummerSlam drew 14,087 paid sellout for \$907,105 (\$162,887 merch., \$11 per cap).

8/19 WWF HEAT ON MTV

(Some segments live from WWF New York)... Hosts: Michael Cole and Al Snow... The announcers hyped SummerSlam and noted that seven of its eight matches would be WWF vs. Alliance matches... The announcers previewed all of the PPV matches throughout the show and also aired video highlight packages on each feud... Backstage, Ivory, Stacy, and Torrie Wilson attacked Lita's knee and left her lying... A recap aired of MTV's "Tough Enough"... Backstage, a trainer and Matt Hardy advised Lita not to wrestle later in the show. The announcers question Jackie's chances of beating the three Alliance women... Jim Ross and Paul Heyman took over on commentary... **(1) Jackie & Molly beat Ivory & Stacy & Torrie Wilson in a handicapped match when Lita interfered.** Early in the match, Molly ran to the ring to help Jackie. Later, Lita hobbled to the ring and gave the Twist of Fate to Ivory. Jackie took advantage of Lita's interference and pinned Ivory to win the match. Afterward, Paul Heyman joined the Alliance women in the ring and complained about Lita's interference. Heyman challenged the three WWF women to wrestle the Alliance women on Raw... A video feature hyped SummerSlam's co-main events... [J.P.]

This is the fourth installment of a five-part "Torch Talk" with Konnan where he talks about the final edition of Nitro, working with Paul Heyman, the WWF-WCW angle, and the Mexican wrestling scene. The interview was conducted July 20.

Jason Powell: You were backstage at the final Nitro. Was it an emotional night because it was the final show, or were most of the wrestlers happy that the Time Warner days were over?

Konnan: Everyone was happy that it was over, but guys were also sad that no one knew who the WWF was going to pick up. There were a lot of production guys that were down. I actually saw some of them crying because they were like, "F—, where are we going to go for work?" It isn't like they could go to independent shows. It came out of nowhere, boom, that's it, you are finally sold. I remember when Shane (McMahon) came in and everyone applauded. It was funny because I could remember Shane from ten years before that being a lot younger, but just about the same height. I told myself, "Wow, this guy has really moved up." Back then, he was basically behind the scenes absorbing everything and getting ready for what he is doing now. He's done a great job.

Powell: Did you have a chance to talk with Shane or anyone from the WWF that night?

Konnan: Yeah. I had talked a couple of times to (Chris) Jericho, Raven, and Eddie (Guerrero) and told them that I wanted to go to the WWF. This was about a year or two before this. They told me, "Well, you know, they say that you've had problems over there." I said: "Well, you know how I am. Tell them why I've had problems, because they tried to screw over the Mexican boys. I've never had problems doing jobs, missing shows, being unprofessional, showing up drunk, or talking back to management." I've never been that type of person. Then I would talk to Rey and Juvi and they would ask me to wait for them. I said, "F— it, we'll just wait until all of our contracts are up and we'll all leave together." But I went up to Shane in Panama City and said, "Hey, Shane, I don't know if you remember me?" He said, "Yeah, you did the robot gimmick." I said: "Yeah. I don't know if you've heard reports that I have a bad attitude or whatever..." He said, "Everyone is going to start with a clean slate, plus I think you are talented." He actually said my catch phrase, so I thought it was cool because he's a young guy who understood my gimmick. But I haven't been called yet.

Powell: You have some history as a color commentator. If the WWF isn't interested in you as a wrestler, would you be willing to go there as a commentator?

Konnan: Like Jerry Lawler was doing? I don't know. He's the best and I'd always be scrutinized, like has happened to Paul E. That's pretty hard. I don't think that I have that Jerry Lawler type of wit, but I have my own type of wit. I think I could do that MTV thing (Heat) that they are doing pretty

Konnan on being at the final Nitro

well. I know that I could do something like that. But if they were to tell me, "Hey, we want you to do color commentating and are willing to give you a chance to get your style over," then I would do it. But if it was only going to be on a week-to-week basis, well, it's kind of hard to work like that. But if they gave it to me and told me they wanted me to do my own style and were willing to let the people adjust to my style and get away from Jerry's style, then yeah, I would do it.

Powell: What are your impressions of the Invasion angle thus far?

Konnan: I haven't thought about it too much. I like the idea of combining them (WCW and ECW). I loved the scene where the teams were facing each other and then turned on the WWF wrestlers. I thought that was great TV.

Powell: Considering the talent that they signed, was there any way that they could have made WCW work as a separate entity?

Konnan: No.

Powell: Does it surprise you that the WWF hired and already fired Buff Bagwell?

Konnan: No.

Powell: What was he like to work with?

Konnan: He was cool with me, but he was there for like ten years. He was around all of the great politicians from (Lex) Luger to (Brian) Pillman to Ric Flair. He knows how to play the game. He knows who to be cool with and who not to be cool with. He got away with a lot of stuff for a lot of years, so he obviously knew how to do what he had to do, but it caught up with him. You can't do that in the WWF. I'm surprised that he even tried it there. Dallas Page did a lot of the same things in WCW, but I haven't heard anything about him trying that stuff in the WWF.

Powell: Prior to your WCW run you had a short stint in ECW. How did you get along with Paul Heyman?

Konnan: I think we get along fine. From the minute I met him at Starrcade, I think it was in 1990, we got along great. We have a similar sense of humor. We really bonded on an overseas trip to Singapore in '91 or '92. When we were there, he told me that he wanted to bring in Pat Tanaka. He asked me about Eddie Guerrero and how good he was. I told him that he needed to bring him in. Paul actually wanted Hugh Morrus. He was going to give him the name "The Man With No Name." He was going to have him run in and do a moonsault on someone and run out. He told me a lot of his early ideas. When I finally saw it on TV, I became a huge fan. I actually called him and asked when he was going to bring me in. He asked if I would send him some Mexican talent. When WCW called me, I was very honest with him. He wasn't very happy about it and I don't think he was very happy when I left. I was one of the first guys who ever really left, but I wasn't there all that long. I told him that I was going to do his style in Mexico and I did. It became super popular. For three years I ran AAA and did a lot of ECW-style stuff. I would call Paul E. and tell him what I did and ask him why something went wrong and he would

explain it to me. I saw him in L.A. not too long ago because he wanted Psicosis to work for him at a pay-per-view, the one where they got into a fight with XPW. I would think that he would be someone who would bring me in, but I haven't heard from him either.

Powell: You mentioned AAA and Los Angeles. Why don't we see lucha libre in that market anymore? You used to draw well at the L.A. Sports Arena and it seemed like it was the big thing several years ago, but it doesn't seem to happen anymore.

Konnan: They have had two cards there in the last two months and outdrew XPW. The reason it stopped was because the peso was devalued. It was hard because it was hard for Televisa, the Mexican TV company, to fly to L.A. with their cameramen and do what they had to do because of the devaluation.

Powell: There have been so many Mexican wrestlers who have gone home now. Is the Mexican scene booming because these stars went back, or are there new stars now?

Konnan: It's hard because some of the guys who went back were punished by the promoters for leaving and going to Promo Azteca with me. They didn't give work to some of them right away. LaParka works on the independent scene and he's a good example. He's actually the number two draw in Mexico, but he hasn't been able to go back to AAA because the promoter is still mad that he left him. Silver King had that problem. They wouldn't let him wrestle at Arena Mexico for a whole year, but he is finally wrestling there. Some of them had to serve punishment time. It's hard. Vampiro and I were definitely the big stars there when we left. It would be like if Rock, Austin, and Hunter left the WWF right now. They are trying to build new stars, but they haven't been able to build anyone up to our levels yet.

Powell: You have been working shows in Tijuana. Are you trying to get back in with AAA or EMLL?

Konnan: I'm trying to go to EMLL or another new promotion that is going to be starting in a few months.

Powell: There have been reports that AAA and EMLL promoters are trying to blackball you from Mexico. Is that accurate?

Konnan: I won't work for AAA anymore because of the simple fact that I don't like what they are doing. I don't like the type of wrestling they are using or their locker room atmosphere. I think EMLL is trying to give me the same punishment that they are trying to give everyone else. They aren't going to let me work there for a couple of months or maybe even a year because I took so many people with me to WCW.

Powell: I know you were contacted by XPW. Are you planning to do something with them?

Konnan: Yeah, if they want me I will go do something for them. I couldn't do it before (because of contractual obligations to WCW).

RESULTS & ANALYSIS by Wade Keller

Jim Ross and Paul Heyman introduced the event.

(1) Edge pinned Lance Storm at 10:21 to capture the Intercontinental Title. Storm asked for silence from the fans before the match. He got it, and then said, "Splendid!" His voice inflection was really funny, as if he weren't expecting silence and was shocked and somewhat pleased he actually got it. A second later Edge's music began and he came out. Edge was aggressive at the start, and Ross said it was because Team WWF's back was against the wall, having lost at Invasion and all. At 2:30 Storm took over offense. Edge came back and scored a near fall at 3:15 with a surprise cradle. Storm returned with a quick cover a few seconds later, and in a nice touch, Edge kicked out before two (two counts mean more and are more dramatic late in a match if early pin attempts end after just one count, something Heyman specifically took pride in practicing sometimes in ECW). Storm continued to dominate offense with kicks and stomps. They showed Team WWF watching backstage, cheering on Edge. After a few more minutes of solid back and forth action, Christian ran out to help Edge who was caught in a Storm half Boston crab. Christian went to spear Storm, but Storm side-stepped him and he hit Edge by mistake. Edge kicked out of Storm's pin attempt. Edge then caught Storm's attempt at a sidekick and then gave him an Impaler DDT for a clean three count. Heyman complained that it was like a two-on-one. Ross said that Christian hurt Edge so it didn't matter, but Heyman said just the distraction threw Storm off of his gameplan. Most of the match lacked intensity, but it was still a solid opener. (**1/2) [Star Ratings: * is below average; ** is average; *** is very good; **** is excellent]

Test said he joined The Alliance because the WWF was overlooking his potential. He talked up the Dudleys, saying they didn't deserve to be upstaged by little Spike. Test said Shane McMahon recognizes their greatness.

Lilian Garcia interviewed Chris Jericho. Jericho called her Vivian. He said "everybody remembers their first time." He said Stephanie must remember her first time because it was with the captain of every sports team and school organization at the same time. [8:21 p.m.]

(2) Test & The Dudleys beat The APA & Spike Dudley when Test pinned Bradshaw at 7:17. Heyman complained that APA beat up Test thinking he was a mole when it turned out he wasn't. Ross quipped suggestively, "You do think the Mole deserves to be beaten up, right Paul?" Test and the Dudleys fought evenly with APA early, but when Spike tagged in he took a beating. Test was going to drop Spike over the top rope onto a ringside table, but Spike shifted his weight and fell on top of Test in the ring. D-Von and Bubba gave Spike a flapjack. Bubba scored a two count. At 6:00 Bradshaw tagged in and went on a flurry of hard-hitting offense against The Dudleys and Test. Bradshaw ducked Test's big boot and gave him a powerbomb for a two count. Bubba yanked Bradshaw off of Test to save the match. Test threw Spike over the top rope through the table at ringside. Bradshaw gave Test the Clothesline from hell. Shane, though, entered and nailed Bradshaw with a chair giving a groggy Test the pin. Great high-impact chaos in the final two minutes, although a couple of key camera shots were missed due to ill-timed cutaways to other happenings, most notably Bubba saving Test after the powerbomb. (**3/4)

Christian said Grandma was on the phone to congratulate Edge for his title win. After Edge said hi to Grandma, Christian tried to say goodbye, but Grandma already hung up. Christian blamed a bad connection.

Shawn Stasiak entered Debra's dressing room and said he has "Mecca" written on the back of his tights but he doesn't even know what it means. Debra asked Stasiak why he's bugging her when Steve Austin has a big match against Kurt Angle later. He said he just wants to impress Austin. Debra said he could impress Austin by winning a match. She told him to knock next time, too.

(3) X-Pac pinned Tajiri at 8:38 to become both WCW and WWF Light-Heavyweight Champion. Ross announced early in the match that this was the last WWF PPV on DirecTV. Tajiri flipped onto X-Pac at ringside at 2:00. X-Pac fought back by shoving Tajiri in a surfboard submission hold followed by a powerbomb for a two count. The crowd popped for Tajiri's comeback against X-Pac at 4:00 with a killer slidekick and a graceful handspring elbow. He followed with the Tarantula which also popped the crowd. Tajiri went to the top and hit a crossbody block, but X-Pac rolled through and scored a two count. Tajiri put X-Pac in a series of innovative pinning combinations including a backslide type move off the ropes. X-Pac hit Tajiri with a somersault plancha over the top rope at ringside. At 7:00 Albert walked to ringside. Tajiri sprayed Albert with the red mist. X-Pac immediately surprised Tajiri with an X-Factor for the pin. Good match. (**3/4)

They went live to WWF New York where Perry Saturn asked the fans to help him find Moppy. He showed a milk carton with a drawing on Moppy on the side. He said Moppy wouldn't wander away on her own because they're in love... A preview of next week's "Tough Enough" aired... Stephanie gave Rhyno a pep talk saying Jericho's never been able to defeat him before. He said he'd take out Jericho once and for all. Steph said she was counting on it. Talk about pressure!

(4) Chris Jericho beat Rhyno (w/Stephanie) via tapout at 12:34. Heyman pointed out that Rhyno was the last ECW Champion. Good back and forth action the first couple of minutes, including some Jericho chops. At 2:20 Jericho climbed to the top rope. Steph tried to throw him off balance, but he fended her off. He then leaped off the top rope at Rhyno at ringside, but Rhyno caught him with the Gore. Rhyno rolled Jericho back into the ring and scored a two count. Rhyno then put Jericho in a body scissors. Ross pointed out it was an effective move for somebody of Rhyno's bodytype. The announcers did a good job of putting over the old-style move that you don't see often anymore. Rhyno gave Jericho an airplane spin into a High Impact. Later Jericho came off the ropes with a flying forearm, then hit some chops, then went for a Lionsault. Jericho slipped on the second rope and almost landed on his head. He managed to save it relatively well, landing on Rhyno without killing himself, although it looked terrible. The crowd barely had a chance to groan as Jericho climbed to the top rope, but slipped off as he leaped. He landed hard on his right hip. Ross tried to cover for Jericho by saying he must have something slippery on his boots. Rhyno covered the stunned Jericho, but Jericho kicked out at two. The lifts in his boots seemed to be giving him more trouble than usual. He got right back on the horse, though, as a few seconds later he climbed to the second rope and hit a flying dropkick that looked solid. Steph distracted the ref as Jericho made the cover. Jericho got up and forced a kiss on Steph in retaliation. Jericho hit two consecutive Lionsaults, which looked as harmless as they always do (and it's one of those moves that doesn't look like it hurts the opponent, but it actually does). Rhyno came back and put Jericho in the Walls of Jericho, stealing Jericho's move. Rhyno then set up Jericho for the Gore, but Jericho moved. Rhyno hit the ringpost. Jericho then put Rhyno in the Walls of Jericho and ten seconds in Rhyno tapped out. Steph threw a fit at ringside. Most of the match was good, but the two slips really threw off the flow of the match and took the crowd out of it. Those lame Lionsaults don't help either. As Jericho left the ring, he grabbed at his right hip. (**)

William Regal talked to The Rock backstage. Rock said Booker tried to keep him from arriving at SummerSlam, but it didn't work; it just "pissed him off" instead. As Rock and Regal talked, Stasiak flew at Rock, but he missed and flew right between Rock and Regal, crashing into a garage door. Rock and Regal ignored him. Stasiak's bit is funny. It's good use of his goofy charisma. He has charisma, but it's certainly not the type that you take seriously.

(5) Rob Van Dam beat Jeff Hardy at 16:33 to

What: WWF SUMMERSLAM

When: August 19, 2001

Where: San Jose, Calif. at The Pond

capture the Hardcore Title. This was one of those crash and burn high-impact highspot matches that could have easily led to one of them badly breaking his neck or a leg. They executed some innovative spots with the ladder, which was introduced to the match at 3:30. The match lacked certain discipline in the sense that there was no obvious story told, there was inconsistent long-term selling, and they attempted overambitious spots which ended up botched. Hardy climbed the ladder to try to reach the Hardcore Title belt hanging from the ceiling above for the first time at 9:40. Van Dam leaped off the top rope and knocked Hardy to the mat. At 11:00 Van Dam climbed the ladder. Hardy leaped off the top rope and dropkicked Van Dam off the ladder. The two wrestlers and the ladder all fell to the mat at once on top of each other. They each went for their big splashes (Swanton, Five-Star), and both missed. Van Dam suplexed Hardy off the top of the ladder to the mat. About as smooth a suplex as you'll see under those circumstances. They both climbed the ladder again and Hardy gave Van Dam a sunset flip off the top of the ladder, perhaps the high point of the match. Hardy climbed the ladder and grabbed onto the belt. Van Dam yanked the ladder out from underneath Hardy, leaving Hardy swinging from the belt. Van Dam went to the top rope and leaped toward Hardy with a kick, but missed by several feet. Hardy dropped to the mat on his own and slapped the mat in disappointment (either because of the missed spot or to sell that he couldn't get the belt down). Hardy climbed the ladder again, but Van Dam knocked him off. Hardy bumped to the mat hard. Van Dam then climbed the ladder and won. A flawed, yet exciting, high-risk high-impact match, and the fact that they walked away was amazing (and lucky). (**1/2)

(6) Undertaker & Kane beat Dallas Page & Kanyon at 10:15 in a cage match to capture the WWF Tag Team Titles and retain the WCW Tag Team Titles. Taker and Kane (who was limited due to a back injury) dominated offense from the start. Kanyon tried to escape up the side of the cage but ended up taking a big bump to the mat. Taker set up a chokeslam at 1:30, but Page kicked him low to escape. Page and Kanyon got in some offense, but Taker and Kane brushed it off. At 5:50 Kanyon and Page both climbed to the top of the cage to escape. Taker climbed the cage and knocked Page to the mat and then bravely stood on the top of the cage. Kane let Kanyon escape. That left Page against both Taker and Kane. Page yelled at Kanyon for leaving him alone. Taker gave Page a sidewalk slam, but he lifted Page's shoulder after the second count. At 9:00 Taker offered Page a chance to leave if he agreed to never look at Taker's wife again. Kane yelled at Taker, apparently telling him not to let off Page easy. Taker then turned around and chokeslammed Page off the top rope. The crowd cheered as Taker signalled for the Last Ride. He slammed Page to the mat and scored the pin. Taker's wife yelled at Page after the match. Solid match. (**1/2)

As Rock assured a trainer he was ready to wrestle, Stasiak charged at Rock again, but missed badly.

(7) Kurt Angle beat Steve Austin via DQ, so Austin retained the WWF Title at 22:30. They brawled in the aisle for a minute before the bell. They fought back and forth in the ring for the opening few minutes. At 5:00 Angle hit a series of suplexes, but when he went for the Olympic Slam, Austin escaped. Austin suffered a small cut on the side of his head. At 7:30 Austin hit Angle with the Stunner out of nowhere. Angle kicked out. Austin hit another Stunner, then grabbed the WWF Title belt to use as a weapon, but ref Earl Hebner yanked it away first. Austin rammed Angle into the ringpost, then punched at his face. Angle was bleeding so heavily from his forehead that Heyman suggested they

stop the match. Austin scored a very near fall on the bloodied Angle. They brawled at ringside and briefly into the crowd. Angle surprised Austin with the anklelock at ringside. In a burst of adrenaline, Angle yelled, "Yahoo!" and the crowd popped. Back in the ring Angle applied the anklelock again. Austin reached the ropes at 13:40. At 16:00 Angle hit the moonsault off the top rope. Austin kicked out. Austin then reversed Angle into a cobra clutch. Austin gave Angle the Stunner at 19:00, but Angle kicked out. Angle surprised Austin with his Olympic Slam, but he was too groggy to make a quick cover. Angle applied the anklelock again, but Austin reached the ropes. Austin then hit the ref. Angle quickly gave Austin a DDT. Another WWF ref came out, but Austin gave him a Stunner. A third one came out, but Austin hit him in the face with the WWF Title belt. Angle gave the distracted Austin the Olympic Slam. WCW ref Nick Patrik ran to the ring and counted one, but then stopped and signalled for the bell. He explained to ring announcer Howard Finkle that Austin was DQ'd for excessive abuse of the referee. Austin fled the scene. Angle threw Patrik into the ring and gave him the anklelock. Ross yelled, "Kurt Angle just got screwed out of the WWF Title." Great match on every level. The finish didn't take away from it since it fit the storyline and feud context. (****1/2)

(8) The Rock pinned Booker T (w/Shane McMahon) at 15:22 to capture the WCW Hvt. Title. Rock exploded at Booker at the start with a series of punches. He then chased Shane around ringside. They brawled at ringside, then into the crowd. Ross said it would be wrong for the ref to DQ the wrestlers for leaving ringside because that would be a "kiss your sister type finish," trying to sympathize with the fans' frustration over the finish of the previous match. They returned to the ring at 6:30 where Booker scored a two count. Booker dominated Rock for a few minutes, then went to his usual mid-match house show chinlock. Shane hit Rock with the WCW Title belt; the ref didn't see it. The APA ran out and chased Shane around the ring. Shane, in his PPV Moment of Glory, took a great bump off of Bradshaw's Clothesline from Hell at ringside. Back in the ring Booker hit the Book End at 12:00. Ross called it "Rock's Rock Bottom." Rock kicked out. Rock made a comeback. Rock hit the People's Elbow. Just as he was about to score the pin, Shane ran into the ring (somehow having recovered already from the Bradshaw clothesline) and yanked the ref out of position to count the pin. Rock gave Shane the Rock Bottom, but Booker T fought back with an axe kick, then did the Spinarooni. As Booker showboated, Rock surprised with him with the Rock Bottom for the pin. Satisfying main event. Booker played his part well. Nothing close to Austin-Angle, though. (***)

TORCH STAFF REVIEWS

Pat McNeill, columnist (8.0): Best match was Austin vs. Angle. Worst match was Drowning Pool, the bodies and the floor. (Rimshot.) Thank you. I'm in town all week.

There's lots of good news coming out of SummerSlam for wrestling fans. Nothing stunk. This was a well-rounded show, with guys busting their tails. This was a show that tied up all of the main storylines from the past month (with one exception that we'll get to momentarily). This was a show that featured strong attention to detail from the people behind me. Jim Ross and Paul Heyman turned in one of their stronger outings at the announcers' desk.

There weren't any five-star matches on this show. Angle and Austin came the closest, as they put on one of the best North American matches of the year. There shouldn't be any complaints about the finish, either. The finish was letter perfect. When was the last time you saw a disqualification finish in a WWF Title match on pay-per-view? Jim Ross rhetorically asked "What's wrong with Stone Cold?" There's not a damn thing wrong with Stone

Cold, at least not with his work ethic. Austin's sneering brutality was just the ticket to help Angle move up another notch in the eyes of WWF fans.

The Hardcore Title match was another highlight of the show, but it was not the show-stealer that some folks expected. In fact, early in the match there were a couple of badly contrived ladder spots. Hardy and Van Dam managed to build the match well. They may not have hit the finish they wanted, but they were savvy enough to move past the stuff they missed without getting panicky. As good as the match was, it didn't stack up against the suicidal spottiness of some previous Jeff Hardy ladder efforts.

I ended up liking this show probably more than was justified by the matches alone. The evening had a good flow to it. The abuse of Dallas Page had its place, as long as it ends his feud with the Undertaker and gives him a couple of months off. Shawn Stasiak's goofy run-ins haven't lost their luster yet. Test cut a pretty decent promo for himself, so maybe there's some hope for him yet. Jim Ross fired the opening salvo in the WWF's war with DirectTV. Never have I been so glad to have cable. The Rock's match wasn't spectacular, but it was very good and accomplished its purpose.

Now comes the challenging part for the Fed. For the past few years, the period between SummerSlam and Survivor Series has featured some of their weakest creative efforts. I'm talking about such fine material as "Undertaker vs. Kane vs. Austin," "Vince McMahon wins the WWF Title," and "Triple H and Stephanie argue a lot." The WWF has more good talent than they've ever had. Can they keep their competitive edge against the NFL and television's new fall season?

Wade Keller, editor (8.0): SummerSlam didn't feature one below-average match. It was never boring. It peaked with a classic between Steve Austin and Kurt Angle. It ended with the top babyfaces capturing a World Title cleanly in the middle of the ring. It featured a variety of match styles throughout. It settled feuds and forwarded others. Yet... even those who liked the show a lot still have room for complaints.

The main complaint is with the finish of Austin-Angle; I'd argue the finish made total sense given the context of the feud and its placement on the card. It's bad business to end a PPV with a babyface getting screwed out of a title victory. The WWF made sure that didn't happen by having Rock's clean win end the PPV on an "up note." Of course, Rock-Booker wasn't able to live up to Austin-Angle in terms of match quality, but that is the price the WWF had to pay to get the matches in an emotionally satisfying order.

It wouldn't have made sense for Angle to lose clean to Austin. He's done enough clean jobs in the past, and to do another would harm his strong momentum out of the gate as a full-fledged babyface. Had Angle won clean, it would have ended the "chase for the belt" too soon. The money is in the chase, and Angle should chase the belt for a while longer before capturing it.

It wouldn't do Angle, Austin, or the WWF any good to give Angle a short title reign. WWF titles change hands too often as it is. There may have been alternative ways to keep the belt on Austin without having Angle lose by pinfall or tapout (say, the match being stopped due to excessive bleeding), but the fact that Angle won by DQ shouldn't take away

from how great the match was.

Austin and Angle put on a classic. They are extremely convincing in their execution and emotional output during their matches. They seem to really be fighting, not just performing. They seem to really want to win, not just entertain.

Van Dam vs. Hardy was an interesting contrast to Austin-Angle. It finished a close second to Angle-Austin in best match poll, but I didn't think the two matches were even close in terms of quality. However, for those who like to see high-risk, high-impact highspot matches, Van Dam and Hardy provided a showcase of that style. It wasn't the best version of that style. There have been better ladder matches in the WWF in recent years. It was reminiscent of Van Dam's ECW-style ladder matches that were spectacular, yet undisciplined and without a controlled understory supporting the highspots.

The undercard was one above-average match after another. Not great, but solid. The Undertaker & Kane vs. Page & Kanyon match wasn't a classic cage match, but it wasn't bad, either. It served its purpose; it had a beginning, middle, and an end; and it was executed well. It was one-sided, but the nature of the feud almost dictated it would be given Taker's motivation for revenge.

I liked the WWF limiting the card to eight matches. Every match had enough time to develop and not seem rushed. A few could have been even longer, but then never before has the WWF had such roster depth to work with.

SummerSlam showed off the WWF's strengths. The WWF may tell stories on TV through non-wrestling angles more than ever, but those getting the push can also deliver in the ring at these PPV showcases. The WWF has found a good balance in offering a little bit of everything for everyone and enough of what's really important.

Jason Powell, assistant editor (9.0): The WWF put together an impressive line-up on paper and all of the wrestlers delivered. There may have been a couple of matches that didn't live up to my expectations, but it would be hard to classify any as "bad matches." Even though Chris Jericho slipped on the ropes a couple of times, his match with Rhyno was still passable. Overall, the undercard of the show was much better than usual, and both Austin vs. Angle and Rock vs. Booker T lived up to pay-per-view main event standards. Granted, there are a lot of complaints about the Austin vs. Angle finish, but the overall match was strong and the finish made sense from a business standpoint, especially since "Unforgiven" is being held in Angle's hometown of Pittsburgh, Pa.

Management showed a lot of faith in Rock and Booker T by putting their match in the main event slot and both men paid back that trust with a strong showing. Rock didn't look the least bit rusty following his long layoff, and Booker answered his critics by holding up his end of the match. The only negative to the match was that Shane McMahon was involved. His character suffered greatly after being built up as a strong babyface and then turned heel again after fans rejected WCW. It wasn't that Shane did anything to hurt the match, but the WWF should not mistake his "go away" heat for legitimate heel heat.

The Rob Van Dam vs. Jeff Hardy ladder match was a great stunt match. That said, it was

hypocritical of WWF management to ask Van Dam to tone down his reckless style only to immediately insert him into ladder match. And as entertaining as this feud has been, it's hard to believe that these two are content fighting over the lame hardcore belt. The storyline should be that the feud is all about the personal rivalry between the two and not a mangled title that used to change hands four or five times during the same match.

Notes: I enjoyed the opening match more than the other TORCH analysts. In fact, this was the type of match that would have seemed meaningful if it had been booked as the King of the Ring final. Hopefully this feud will create more interest in the Intercontinental Title, which has really been devalued in recent years... The women's match on Heat was embarrassingly bad. The WWF needs to stop forcing non-wrestling females to become wrestlers. In other words, bring back valets. For that matter, bring back ringside managers, too... X-Pac vs. Tajiri was a good match, but like Taker & Kane vs. Page & Kanyon, the title vs. title hype was horrible... I still believe the invasion angle would benefit from the addition of a big name free agent. However, the product has rebounded to the point that signing Goldberg, Hulk Hogan, etc. is no longer the must it seemed to be a month ago...

Bruce Mitchell, senior columnist (7.0): The WWF has changed for the better, and this show was another brick in the solid foundation the company has been building ever since the ECW Hijacking. The booking is logical, the work in the ring is good to great for the most part, and the mistakes are the type of things that either come from over reaching or forgetting some of the details that make for effective storytelling.

Or in other words, Summerslam was real good.

Steve Austin versus Kurt Angle, as a matter of fact, was great. Austin is at the point in his career where he could scale back on the effort and make a potful of money on just his name and personality. Instead he works as hard as anyone in the business in the big matches. His compelling bloody beat down of Angle, and Angle's subsequent stirring comeback was dramatic as all hell, at least until the groan-inducing referee punch out. The WWF was stuck in a tough place, because neither one should lose to the other yet, but this was still cheesy.

Jim Ross's outrage and the clean finish in the finale helped mitigate matters somewhat. I can't wait to see if Triple H tries to keep Angle in his supposed place when he gets back. That could turn out to be something of a miscalculation, because Kurt Angle is something special now and is still improving exponentially. Barring injury, Kurt "Whooh!" Angle will be this generation's Ric Flair, the greatest performer of his time, except he's a better athlete than the Nature Boy.

The Rock's clean win over Booker T was exactly what it should have been, no more and no less. Booker T didn't try to do more than he is capable of right now and, as the Anti-Rock, is a credible foil to the pretty boy favorite. "The Book" is finally getting a chance to learn from working with the top people in the sport and he's clearly benefitted from it. He's another guy I look forward to watching progress. That Show-off Shane should have sold Bradshaw's lariat for two weeks, not two minutes.

As for the other main event, the tag team title unification (like anyone cared in the slightest) was

just awful. Kane was hobbled by a back injury, but Undertaker's ridiculous refusal to sell for his opponents should stop. It should stop, that is, the second he stops wrestling the most tiresome personality in all of sports entertainment (except for maybe Tod Gordon). This was the worst match I completely enjoyed in years. Forget the Hugs parody, you think DDMe realizes his new theme music intro "It's Me, It's Me, it's DDP" is yet another inside joke making fun of him by giving him the same catch phrase as television's all time smelly backwoods hillbilly goofball Ernest T. Bass?

While the Hardcore Ladder match between Jeff Hardy and Rob Van Dam was nowhere near the worst match on the card, it was a step back for RVD. I thought they were toning down this kind of thing. How far off do you think that spin kick for the big finish was? Two feet? Three feet? I don't know; my idea of entertainment isn't waiting for some guy to screw up and break his leg. I hope Ross is right and we've seen the last of this crap.

And speaking of waiting for a guy to break something, I don't know if Chris Jericho had a concussion, or the ring ropes were loose, or he got some of Rhino's hair grease on him, or what, but maybe the Crippler ought to consider wrestling in something besides those ridiculous lifts. He'd be a much more balanced performer minus those nine or ten inches. Rhino needs to add more to his in-ring act. The WWF already has one Tazz.

The Dudleys & Test versus APA & Spike match was okay, but it seems we're going to get that long avoided (for good reason) Test push, like it or not. Lance Storm and Edge was serviceable, even if Edge still lacks something as a single. The much maligned X-Pac had one of his better outings against Tajiri, but the WWF is going to have to do something beyond the old "bitter" gimmick to get fans interested in the guy again. He certainly doesn't deserve the fans' disdain for his in-ring work, but he might for his lack of any update to that stale persona.

READER COMMENTS

John Martin of Rockville, Ind. (8.5): Best: Kurt Angle vs. Steve Austin. Worst: APA & Spike vs. The Dudleys & Test. The show was worth the price tag, although the true strength of the event cannot be determined until it is followed up (or not followed up). The Angle vs. Austin match has to be the best match of the year to this point, and I'd love to see the rematch. Too bad I have DirecTV. Could the ladder match have been any more extreme? RVD and Hardy truly deserved to be given the night off from Raw. They really stole the show. I was a little disappointed in the WCW Title match. I guess I had my heart set on the debut of big named WCW talent. From here, it looks as if all signs are pointing to a WWF/WCW title unification match between The Rock and Steve Austin. Once again, too bad I have DirecTV.

Fred Wall, Winnipeg, Man. (8.5): Best: Van Dam vs. Jeff Hardy. Worst: X-Pac vs. Tajiri (due to the outcome). In terms of wrestling, this was a very solid show and well worth the price of admission. Kurt Angle continues his ascent to Flair status and maybe beyond. In the big picture, though, I'm underwhelmed. In late March, I had high hopes for what the invasion angle might produce and the hopes were rekindled somewhat by the addition of ECW. Since that angle has led to Rock vs. Austin again, I don't care all that much about how the storyline develops over the next month.

Phil K. Ypsilanti, MI (9.0): Best: Austin vs. Angle. Worst: None. I am glad I didn't have to book the matches tonight. Would I have continued to elevate Booker T by putting him (and the WCW title itself) in the main event? Or would I have kept the WWF Title match as the main event? One could make good arguments for both. I'll probably be the only person to say this, but I enjoyed the

Austin vs. Angle finish. Anything to keep Angle from having to do a clean job to Austin after a match like that works for me. Thank God it wasn't another run-in finish. Jericho should have been forced to job out to Haku (remember him?) on Raw for blowing so many spots.

Robby Boris, Los Angeles, Calif. (8.5): Best: Austin vs. Angle. Worst: Taker & Kane vs. Page & Kanyon. At least the Undertaker match was kept short enough to be entertaining. This was my first live pay-per-view, and it was fantastic. The worst thing I can say about it is that some of the matches (Undertaker, Dudleys, Rock) were only good and not great. Nothing sucked and Austin vs. Angle was about as good as it gets. That match and the ladder match were five star matches in my opinion (if not for the DQ finish and blown final spot respectively). Throw in Edge vs. Storm and Tajiri vs. X-Pac, and I walked away a very happy man. A great effort all around.

Bryan Kerkhoven of Montreal, Que. (8.0): Best: Austin vs. Angle. Worst: Taker & Kane vs. Page & Kanyon. A very solid event although some closure on several angles was missing (Jericho vs. Stephanie feud, Edge and Christian breakup). The ladder match was nothing short of spectacular. Unfortunately, the missed spot may have left a bad taste in some people's mouths. But quite frankly, the spot was pretty much impossible to hit, especially after the beating both men had taken at the time of the spot. Angle showed why he is God's gift to wrestling in his excellent performance. Angle's intensity is second to none. Although the finish was a bit weak for a major pay-per-view match, it did a great job of setting up a rematch. The cage match was what I expected and, hopefully, provided closure to the Undertaker vs. Page feud so that both can finally move on. Shawn Stasiak's skits were hilarious and provided excellent comic relief in between exhausting matches. Rock vs. Booker T was what I expected and the finish sets up Rock vs. Austin for both titles at Survivor Series.

Carlin Bardsley of Peterborough, Ont.: (8.0) Best: Austin vs. Angle Worst: Jericho vs. Rhino. A solid card from top to bottom. Austin and Angle had an outstanding match that really overshadowed the main event, despite the Dusty-ness of the finish. The rest of the matches really delivered with the notable exception of Jericho vs. Rhino, and that was all Jericho's doing. Blowing spots left and right and running through moves that are usually performed aerially is not the way to tell Vince McMahon that you belong in main events. We also saw another classic ladder match, with RVD showing once again that he is "Mr. PPV." Kudos to Jeff Hardy for living through it.

Patrick Dumas, Montreal, Que. (8.0): Best: Austin vs. Angle. Worst: APA & Spike vs. The Dudleys & Test. Edge just does nothing for me in singles matches. They need to bring him back with Christian. Jeff Hardy, on the other hand, must stay away from his brother. Jeff had another very good match with RVD, but it was too bad that RVD missed his spot at the end. Speaking of missed spots, one word: Jericho. He missed a couple again tonight. The cage match was better than expected. Both main event matches were pretty good. Austin vs. Angle was the main event in my mind but they couldn't have ended a PPV with such a horrible finish. Angle took a lot of punishment again and was the night's MVP. Rock and Booker both worked hard but their match didn't have the intensity of Austin vs. Angle.

Robert Hamilton, Upper Darby, Pa. (6.0): Best Match: Van Dam vs. Jeff Hardy. Worst: Jericho vs. Rhino. I was impressed with the show on a wrestling level, but I didn't feel it on an entertainment level. I'm not sure what it was, but I was thoroughly underwhelmed by this event. All of the matches had decent to great wrestling, but I wasn't struck with what this show had to offer. I really enjoyed the opening match (Edge vs. Storm) and the Hardy vs. Van Dam ladder match because both had intense action and clean finishes. On the other hand, the co-main events let me down. The Austin vs. Angle finish took away from the war these two were having on this night. Booker vs. Rock was what I expected, but I'm not a big Rock fan, so go figure. Oh yeah, and Chris Jericho needs to stop botching his maneuvers when the spotlight is on him, or he'll never truly make the big time. A decent show, but lacking on overall entertainment.



We control all you see and hear

By Pat McNeill, columnist

Those people who are not familiar with the business of professional wrestling probably think that the World Wrestling Federation had a tough fiscal year. Their launch of the new XFL football league fizzled in public fashion, and they shelled out some greenbacks for the remnants of the dying World Championship Wrestling. But the WWF's latest financial report showed a profit of \$456 million for the completed fiscal year. The WWF was more profitable last year than it has ever been.

The WWF (not to be confused with the World Wildlife Fund) has no national competition. They own World Championship Wrestling. They may own some of what's left of Extreme Championship Wrestling. No other company has stepped forward to run pay-per-views against the WWF. No other company has a national television slot. None of the major wrestling companies in Japan or Mexico are planning to expand into the United States. The WWF also controls its own developmental program, enabling it to create and mold future superstars. What can WWF Entertainment, Inc., do for an encore?

The WWF, like any business at the top of its field, will have to come up with new revenue sources. Some industry analysts thought that the WWF would attempt to either purchase a pay-per-view distributor, or come up with its own company to distribute pay-per-view events. That hasn't happened yet.

The WWF could also opt to expand its revenue stream in a different way. For years, wrestling fans have tossed around the idea of a pro wrestling cable network. It seemed like a pipe dream back when there were two major companies, but with the WWF's purchase of WCW from AOL Time Warner in March, most of the major obstacles to such a network have been swept away. When WWF owner Vince McMahon has been asked about the possibility of a wrestling channel in mainstream interviews, he has either shuffled the question aside or said that the WWF was not ready to undertake such an effort.

But the demand is there. And there's no better time than the present.

If you want to start a full-time cable channel from scratch, you will end up paying a heavy price. In order for the WWF (or anybody else) to launch a full scale cable network from scratch, it requires an investment of \$50-100 million dollars, plus a ramp-up period of six to twelve months for the network to put all of its pieces together. This is a large investment, to be sure, but it's nothing that the WWF can't afford. In other words, you need money and time. Not surprisingly, these are two items that WWF Entertainment, Inc. owns in abundance.

What are the potential rewards? Earlier this year, Sony Pictures Entertainment sold a half

interest in one of my favorite channels, the Game Show Network, to a company called Liberty Digital for a cool \$235 million. With a little junior high school math, you can see that the Game Show Network has an estimated net worth of \$470 million. Keep in mind that the Game Show Network has two original shows, which provide a grand total of five hours of original programming per week, and you can see that it doesn't take a lot of creative energy to create a cash cow of some magnitude.

Let's say that the World Wrestling Federation sees the wisdom of owning and operating "The Slam Network," the wrestling cable channel. The WWF's next step is to make sure that people will be able to see the channel. For a normal start-up cable network, this grueling process would involve learning how to get satellite time, copious amounts of testing, and groveling before every major cable company and satellite provider. For the World Wrestling Federation, things should be considerably easier. As a matter of fact, the WWF is currently at the table negotiating a new deal with DirecTV, a deal that is supposed to fatten the wallets of all concerned. The WWF is the top source of pay-per-view revenue for DirecTV. How difficult would it be to slide a wrestling network onto the DirecTV lineup? Not that difficult at all.

Next up are the cable networks. The McMahon family has never been shy about confronting cable networks in the name of protecting its business. In 1987, the WWF put the kibosh on the NWA's initial Starcade pay-per-view by scheduling its first Survivor Series against it and convincing cable companies to lock Jim Crockett's effort out of the market. In 1989, the WWF begged its fans to call their local cable companies and badger them until they agreed to carry every WWF pay-per-view. Just last year, the WWF and Viacom put together a major effort to rally fan support and convince cable companies to carry TNN, the new national home of WWF Raw.

With the cable television industry more consolidated than ever, the WWF only needs the cooperation of a handful of multiple system operators (MSOs) to gain a foothold in the cable industry. Cable television is moving toward digital cable in order to compete with the expanded lineup of satellite television. Most cable companies are likely to be as hungry for a WWF channel as the satellite companies are.

So, once the WWF has everybody lined up, what the heck will they put on their new cable network? One hundred and sixty-eight hours a week of satellite time to fill. It's best to reduce the exercise to one of elementary mathematics. The idea of filling twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week is pretty daunting, until you take a look at how the other cable networks do it.

Many cable networks average six to eight hours of infomercials a day. Infomercials mean guaranteed moolah to a cable network, and there sure are enough of them. By allotting eight hours a day in the

early morning/late night bracket for those infomercials, the bar is lowered by one third. One hundred and sixty-eight minus fifty-six leaves one hundred and twelve hours to go.

It's time to break out the original programming, and time to be creative about it. Trouble is, the WWF's first run wrestling programming is committed to Viacom. But that still gives the WWF a great deal of leeway to use its second run programming. You see, TNN has never shown a rerun of WWF Raw. UPN has never repeated an episode of WWF SmackDown. They don't have to. The WWF puts out new shows every week, which is what separates it from many other forms of televised entertainment. As any fan of American network television knows, if you haven't seen it, it's new to you.

Nowadays, many first run network television shows are being replayed on cable television during the same season they are on a network. If the WWF hasn't already negotiated for those rights, it's time to do so.

For years, wrestling fans have tossed around the idea of a pro wrestling cable network. It seemed like a pipe dream back when there were two major companies, but with the WWF's purchase of WCW from AOL Time Warner in March, most of the major obstacles to such a network have been swept away.

Let's say that the WWF picks up the right to air second run episodes of Raw, Smackdown, Heat, Metal, and Jakked just a few weeks after their initial airing on Viacom or in syndication. The WWF Channel now has six hours of fresh programming a week. If they rebroadcast every show once a week, as is natural for a cable network, that makes a total of twelve schedule hours filled. One hundred hours left to go.

We're rolling now. Two airings a week of WWF Tough Enough reruns and WWF Byte This knocks an additional two hours off the schedule. Two thirty-minute airings a week of the unedited videos that the WWF Tough Enough applicants sent in. That show could be the sleeper hit of the network. An hour of TNN Robot Wars reruns (starring Mick Foley), plus one replay nets an additional two hours. Five down. Ninety-five hours left to go.

If you're completely stuck on how to proceed from here, now is a good time to remember that the WWF not only has a massive video library, but it also owns the rights to the WCW video library. The magic number for getting reruns of a television show into syndication is a hundred episodes. There were about 165 episodes of WCW Thunder taped for broadcast. There were approximately 800 episodes of World Championship Wrestling on TBS Superstation.

There were at least 600 episodes of WCW Worldwide. There are approximately 250 episodes of WCW Monday Nitro floating around, and that doesn't even make allowances for the three-hour versions of Nitro, or the hour-long version that ran for thirty-one weeks.

With that volume of material, there is easily enough footage to run six hours a day of old WCW/NWA wrestling, five days a week. Thirty hours a week of programming, without even blinking. Sixty-five hours still to go, and we're not even using the footage at its peak efficiency.

Assuming that the side with the money gets the duke in the big ECW trademark brouhaha, the WWF could also end up with ECW's video library. One hour a week, replayed once, in order to keep from exposing Paul Heyman's best work as dated material. In the interest of fairness, allot Jim Cornette the same amount of time for reruns of Smoky Mountain Wrestling, and give Ross some time for old Mid-South Wrestling show. Six hours a week, leaving a total of fifty-nine hours to fill.

Don't forget the developmental territories. Ohio Valley has a television show, as does UPW and the IWA. Eventually, the WWF will probably have another territory in Memphis, but you can always fill with episodes of Bill Behrens's NWA Wildside show until they do. Four one-hour shows, rerun once, fill eight hours. Fifty-one hours left to go.

Some of you may question the wisdom of opening the channel up to territories, or even to Bill Behrens. But there's absolutely nothing for the WWF to worry about. They have the talent and the production values, making any other promotion that appears on the channel automatically look second-rate. Plus, they'll be signing contracts with Vince and friends which would effectively stall them from getting national TV deals on their own. Right, Vince?

Oh, and we completely forgot about the WWF's own video library. Over 200 two-hour episodes of Raw, plus another couple hundred of the one-hour variety. Over 100 episodes of Smackdown. Over 150 episodes of Sunday Night Heat and counting. Plus 250 episodes of the old Prime Time Wrestling show, not to mention WWF and WWWF syndicated programming from the days when syndicated shows mattered. Eight hours a day. Five days a week. Forty hours filled. Eleven hours to go.

At this point in the game, it's time to be playful. Set aside the least profitable two hours a week for the "Independent Wrestling Spotlight." Get indie promoters to mail in copies of their shows, with at least two different camera shots. Get them to sign away their rights for the chance to air their shows on national television. Use these tapes to completely bury the reputations of any non-WWF affiliated independent promotion in the country.

At the suggestion of Brian the Roommate, buy the rights to the series "Thunder in Paradise," to keep somebody in line. One hour a week.

Solve the problem of what wrestling fans should do on Sunday night when the WWF is not running a pay-per-view. Fill three hours every Sunday night with "The Big Event," featuring must-see wrestling material, including stuff like classic WWF/WCW/NWA pay-per-views, vintage WWF shows from Madison Square Garden and

TORCH MAJOR EVENTS SCHEDULE

8/25: WWF in Des Moines, Ia.
 8/26: WWF in Ft. Wayne, Ind.
 8/27: WWF Raw, Grand Rapids, Mich.
 8/28: WWF Smackdown taping, Detroit, Mich.
 9/1: WWF in Worcester, Mass.
 9/2: WWF in Halifax, N.S.

9/3: WWF Raw, Toronto, Ont.
 9/4: WWF Smackdown taping, Toronto, Ont.
Upcoming major dates
 9/22: MECW TV taping, Philadelphia, Pa.
 9/23: WWF "Unforgiven" PPV, Pittsburgh, Pa.
 9/28: UFC PPV, Las Vegas, Nev. at Mandalay Bay

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other major venues, or old WWF Fanatic shows after they have outlived their shelf-life. Make this show the premium showcase for all things good about professional wrestling. On nights when the WWF is running pay-per-views, run tapes of classic XFL football games.

An hour a week, plus one replay, for "Inside the Wrestlers' Studio," featuring in-depth biographies of current and past WWF talent. A new episode each week. Treat Paul Wight's career with the same gravity as Steve Austin's, and trust the fans to get the joke. This segment can also be used for other documentaries, like "The Making of Fuji Vice."

Two hours a week of college or amateur wrestling. Really. It shouldn't be too hard to get the broadcast rights, and there are plenty of fans of the genre out there.

Finally, to fill the last hour, it's time for the sort of show that you can only get on the Slam Network. "The Best of Tuesday Night Titans." Finished. Done.

Would hardcore wrestling fans, the sort of fans who visit our website and read this newsletter, tune in to watch some of the programming on the Slam Network? Is the Pope Catholic?

Would the casual wrestling fan flip by every once in a while to check things out? Probably. And if they saw something that they liked, they might stick around.

Now that we're done, and we have our lineup set, here comes the best part for the WWF. The World Wrestling Federation now holds leverage over Viacom, DirecTV, or any other potential television partner. Once the channel is launched, and has attained a certain level of coverage over North

America, the WWF can tell television network to go jump. Got a problem over the rights to Raw? The McMahons can threaten to air Raw on its own station. Need an extra national cable timeslot to launch WCW as a separate promotion? The WWF doesn't need to wait on TNN to free up the space. They could do it on their own.

So why not give this a shot? What is holding the WWF back? Perhaps there is some concern that a wrestling cable network could water down the demand for pro wrestling as a whole. Well, that was the argument that the WWF used against World Championship Wrestling in 1995 when WCW launched Nitro on Monday nights to compete against Raw. Rather than kill the wrestling business, the competition helped to revitalize the industry.

As Wade Keller put it in TORCH #425 "Exciting wrestling makes people want to spend money on wrestling." The WWF may not have outside competition to contend with, but they can use the reminders of what professional wrestling was in the recent and distant past. The history lessons that they could absorb from their own videotape libraries could help propel the business into the future.

ESPN hasn't held down the demand for televised sports. MTV hasn't ruined sales in the music industry. Home Box Office hasn't killed the movie business. A dedicated cable network won't kill wrestling. It can only make it stronger.

Pat McNeill of Triangle, Va. has been a Torch Team Contributor since April 2000. His pithy commentaries can be read on PWTorch.com about three times a week.

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END NOTES by Wade Keller

WCW Era Is Over: When is the official end of the WCW era? When Nitro went off the air? When the WWF purchased WCW? When the WWF abandoned plans to run WCW as a separate promotion? When the Fusient deal fell through? Or perhaps when David Arquette won the WCW Title, putting a harsh ending to any respectable lineage credibility the title had? To different people, each of those instances marked the official death of WCW. Others may have other moments that stand out as the official end.

For me, it is the week that the "WCW Newswire" page is taken out of the TORCH. That is this week. Even after the WWF purchased WCW, there were still many WCW issues to deal with, including the contract status of talent still getting paid by AOL Time Warner. There were weekly revelations about the finances and sale of WCW that justified the WCW page remaining.

Most of all, the WCW Newswire page stuck around because WWFE planned to run it as a separate entity. If WCW had its own wrestlers, its own titles, its own TV show, its own house shows, its own PPV, even though it was owned by the same parent company as the WWF, it would have deserved its own news page.

In the past couple of weeks, though, several events have occurred to make the WCW Newswire page obsolete, and thus mark the official end in my mind of the WCW era. For one, the WWF got the late night Saturday slot on TNN they originally sought for WCW, but decided not to make it a WCW show. Also, all storylines at this stage point toward further integration of the two

pools of talent and titles, not an eventual separation. You rarely even hear the WWF mention WCW anymore. WCW talent is usually referred to as being part of The Alliance. Steve Austin is the head of The Alliance, not Booker T or Goldberg or Kevin Nash or Hulk Hogan or another WCW-type name.

At SummerSlam, when the WCW and WWF Tag Titles were unified for the first time ever, it wasn't even among the top ten things talked about from the PPV. When those titles were unified, a WWF Team held the WCW belts and a former WCW team held the WWF belts—hardly painting a picture of a historical moment. The personal issue between Taker and Page completely overshadowed the historical significance of the "unification."

Perhaps most notably, The Rock—a WWF wrestler—captured the WCW Title from Booker T. That didn't mean he became an Alliance member or a WCW member. It just meant he got to carry the WCW Title belt. Holding the belt doesn't in any way link you to the organization. That ended when WWF champ Austin jumped to The Alliance.

On a different level, the WCW era ended over the past two weeks when the story of the sale of WCW to the WWF sustained closure. We were able over the past two weeks to piece together the sale price of WCW and the reasons AOL Time Warner management decided to sell in the first place.

It's also apparent the WWF isn't going to sign any big-name former WCW names anytime soon. When they eventually do acquire the services of some former WCW names, they'll likely be brought in not necessarily as part of WCW or The Alliance. They'll be brought in as free agents. The method of their introduction to WWF TV will not be dictated or necessarily even influenced by the fact that they last

competed in a WCW ring.

WCW has become irrelevant. So irrelevant that when ECW joined them, they—once a much larger company than ECW—didn't absorb ECW into the WCW name. Instead, a new name was created—The Alliance. The WCW letters barely carry any significant weight. If anything, they are seen as a drawback. When you think Alliance, you think Austin, Stephane, Shane, Paul E., Booker, and maybe even Shawn Stasiak before you think of the letters WCW.

Sure, there will still be WCW-related stories, such as the pending dates over the next few months and next few years as the AOL Time Warner contracts of Jeff Jarrett, Scott Steiner, Kevin Nash, Ric Flair, and Goldberg expire. There may eventually be a WCW program, but not necessarily. WCW means so little now, and its fan base has been either turned off completely or converted into WWF fans, that if McMahon did launch a separate promotion, he might not even use the WCW name.

The title vs. title aspect of Rock vs. Austin probably won't add even one purchase to the PPV they eventually headline. It will look nice on the poster, and it will be recorded in the history books, but is there any doubt that once the titles are unified that the belt will simply be referred to as the WWF Title, not the Unified Title, not the WWF/WCW Title, and certainly not the WCW Title.

So, for the first time since this newsletter began in 1987, there is no WCW/NWA Newswire section. For me, the WCW era officially ends this week. What was your decisive moment? Or hasn't it happened yet? We welcome your letters chronicling the day WCW became "past tense" for you. We'll print them in an upcoming issue.