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ATLANTIC CROSSINGS – A look with flyers, ads and posters at how some of our 60s/70s stars fared abroad, particularly in the US... and a peak at one or two of the foreign stars who made the trek over here, to see what sort of opposition they faced at home. (It is only a peak ... I know there are many, many more who deserve mentions)

Introduction : We didn't hear much about UK and Irish wrestlers abroad at the time because of the absence of press interest ... and, of course, a little thing called the internet hadn't been invented!

But many of the names that graced the posters outside wrestling venues up and down this country were also carving second careers abroad. It's clear that in many, if not most cases, the second career was far more lucrative than the career back at home.

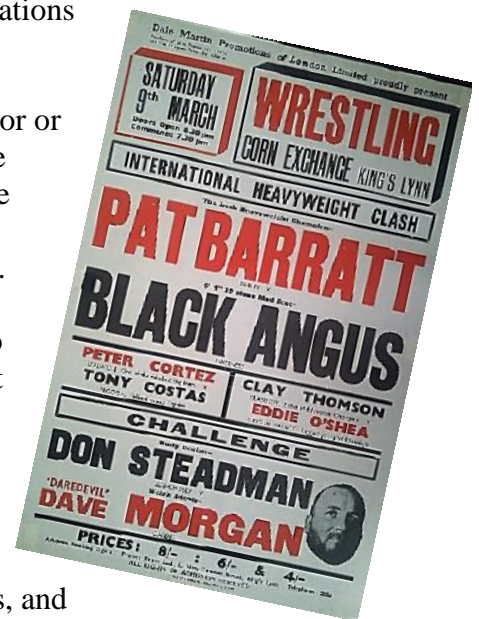
Wayne Bridges – whose US story is told elsewhere in Heritage – told me it was Japan, Canada and the US promoters who lined his pocket, and the tournaments in Germany would provide a month's worth of guaranteed work (injuries permitting) using the same hotel and negating the need for daily flights or lengthy drives.

However, we will concentrate on things across the Atlantic, and what few of us realised at the time was that some of our heroes became heels when out of our sight. There was also clearly something of a clique of grapplers who knew each others' work well and were often billed together in various permutations both in the US and over here.

Off We Go : Call him Irish, Paddy, Ivor or Pat. No matter. Pat Barrett really made waves when he left Irish shores. In the UK he was seen as rough and tough, but by no means an out and out heel.

He took on the villains, like Kendo and Angus in the UK (l and r), but when in the US it became a different matter.

He made a heel name for himself in short order, but never turned his back entirely on Irish or UK rings, and when he retired he penned one of wrestling's most sought-after books.



Pat Barrett was never at a loss for words to bring in the fans, and it was partly his Irish gift of the gab and skills with the microphone which endeared him to the Stateside promoters.

And he was given some pretty tough opposition, too. He clashed a number of times after arriving in the US with the fearsome, fork-wielding Abdullah the Butcher and lived to tell the tale. This battle (R) was from 1968. His greatest feat, though, was to hold the WWF World Heavyweight Tag Team belt with Dominic DeNucci, who was big mates with champ Bruno Sammartino. Pat, or Bonecrusher as he began to be billed, never got to the top prize, but here in Seattle he's supporting the Champion at the time ... Gene Kiniski.

Paddy did share the ring with the heavy heavyweights, though, including Haystacks Calhoun and Andre the Giant, and he kept UK fans happy with frequent trips back across the Atlantic.

In the flyer (below) from San Jose, Pat is one of the supports, facing Roger Kirby, also known as Ripper Kirby, with whom he feuded in the seventies. There's another interesting name

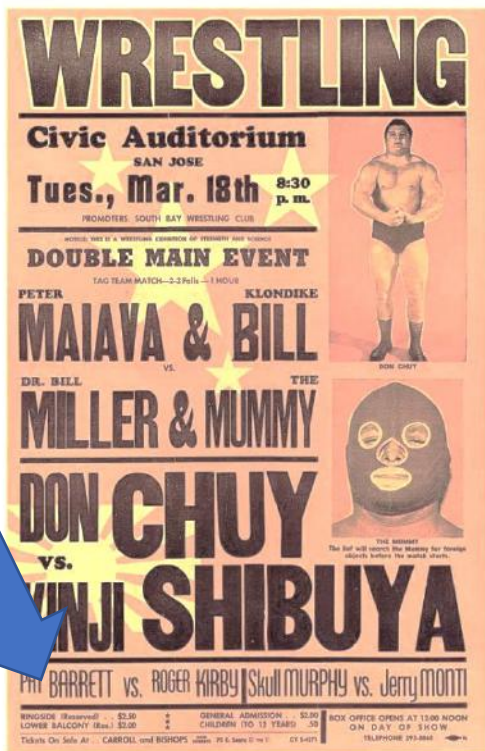
sharing the bill. Peter Maivia made a great impression in the UK, even though he was only here for a short time. In America he won the NWA Tag Championship with Pat Patterson, but his first love was Hawaii where he picked up title after title.

The latest generation of wrestling fans will probably only know Maivia as the maternal grandfather to Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson. But to Golden Years fans he was up there with the best.

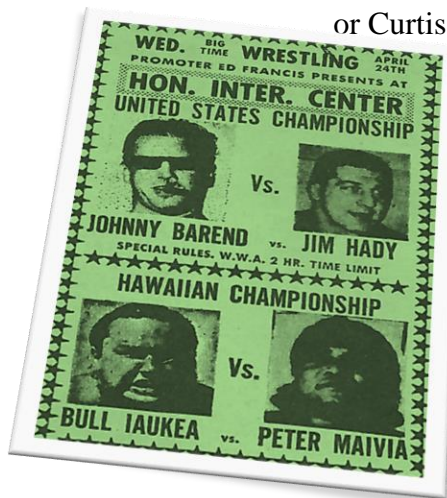
Maivia would travel and tag with Kinji Shibuya all over the globe. He died of cancer at the age of 45 in 1982 and was wrestling until shortly before he became ill.

And looking at that bill, little did Klondike Bill and Skull Murphy know that they'd be lending

their names to smaller – yet still substantial – wrestlers on the other side of the Atlantic in next to no time.



Before we leave Peter Maivia, here's a clipping from an Hawaii paper (L) showing him set to face his friend and rival Curtis Iaukea, billed variously as King, Bull, or Curtis. Few who remember his trip to the UK will ever forget him ... this was one big man.

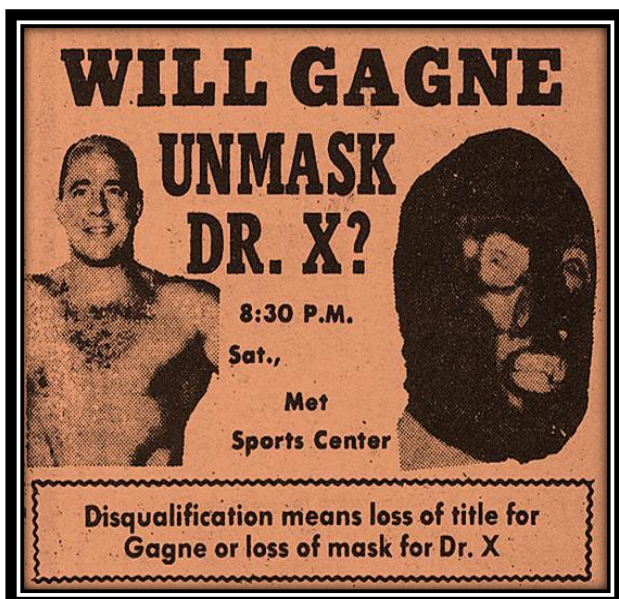
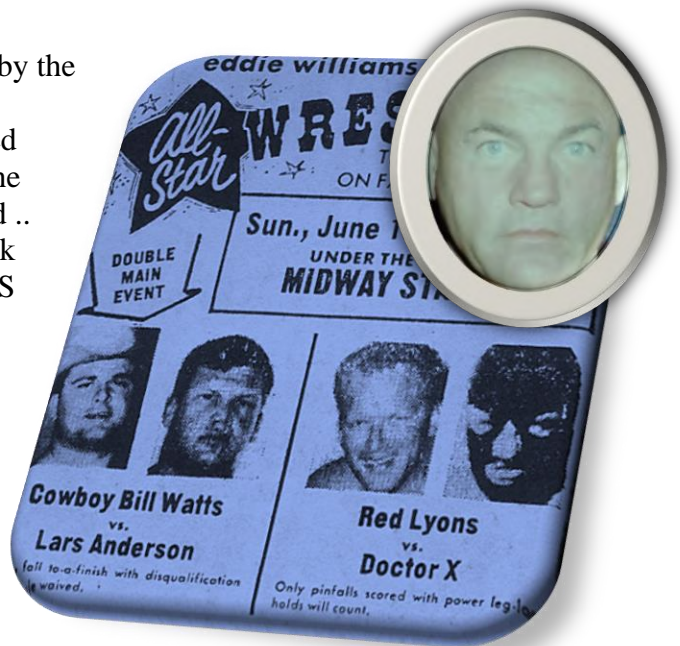


It is to be hoped Bull's UK trip money in the mid 60s was not premised on victories, though. I can find but one single record of a winning match. Against Johnny Yearsley ... and that was televised. Off screen the story was different. Knocked out or disqualified against a Who's Who of UK-based talent ... Ian Campbell, Count Bartelli, Albert Wall, Mike Marino, John Cox, Gwynn Davies. Against Kendo it was a double disqualification. The list goes on. But away from our shores he got back to winning ways ... although a title chance against Bruno Sammartino ended in tears. In one of his few

London outings Iaukea fell foul of the Outlaw, the first masked man on UK TV. Let's spotlight him ...

Gordon Nelson (R) really became adopted by the UK using both his real name, and as the hooded supremo known as the Outlaw (often copied .. never equalled). Back in Canada and the US his identity crisis deepened. Yes he was Gordon Nelson, yes he was the Outlaw.

But he was also a Tim Woods replacement as white masked goody Mr Wrestling (above) ... and black-masked



and black-hearted Dr X after 1969, following Dick Beyer. (He was also The Masked Terror, Mr X #I and Wrestling Pro #II !!) The newspaper clip (above) of his battle against Red Lyons in 1969 has one of the strangest stipulations I've ever seen : "Only pinfalls scored with power leg-lock holds will count"! The World Title match against Verne Gagne (L) saw the Doctor actually snatch the title ... for a few days only. But who's counting? Gordon Nelson was a champ.

Nelson first appeared in the UK in the late 50s, aged in his twenties and racked up a long list of scalps as he toured the globe. When he returned to the UK in 1964 he was maskless but, again made his mark before stepping up a gear, becoming the Outlaw and defeating almost all put before him.

Big names like Albert Rocky Wall, Dennis Mitchell, Al Hayes,

Steve Veidor, Buddy Montes, Joe Cornelius. They all left the ring vanquished ... beaten by the man who would become the first masked wrestler on UK television.



One notable exception, though, was arguably Britain's greatest wrestling export. Billy Robinson (L). Two battles in 1967 ... one masked and one unmasked ... ended in disqualification for our adopted Canadian, Mr Nelson.

Robinson, of course, went on to achieve not only an enviable record in the States and beyond, but the respect of wrestlers young and old as a catch-as-catch-can grappler who could really look after himself.

He had a reputation for roughing up anyone he thought wasn't coming up to scratch. Wayne Bridges told me he'd heard about Robinson's reputation, but said : "He never tried anything on with me." I guess that says much about Wayne's skill and Robinson's respect for it.







Like Pat Barrett, Billy didn't shy away from extreme matches, and feuded with Abdullah the

Butcher. This surprised a lot of scholars who thought Robinson wouldn't want to have much to do with Abby's fork-wielding thuggery. Similarly, he crossed swords, or should that be pens, with the original US Sheik (L), another performer more interested in stabbing than wrestling. Robinson certainly never got the chance to show the Butcher or the Sheik many of his catch skills. But he stood his ground.



He blazed a trail in Japan as well as the US. The Japanese really took to his strongman image and his hotel room must have mirrored a branch of Garlands-R-Us.



WRESTLING		
 NICK BOCKWINKEL AWA World Champion	WINNIPEG ARENA THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 1979 — 8:00	 AL TOMKO Promoter
MAIN EVENT		
CAGE MATCH		
	PAT PATERSON & RAY STEVENS	
vs		
	VERNE GAGNE & MAD DOG VACHON	
SPECIAL BILLY ROBINSON	SPECIAL STEVE OLSONOSKI	OPENER DOUG SOMNERS
vs	vs	vs
THE SHEIK	WAN VALDEZ	DAVE KOCHIN
PICK UP YOUR TICKETS AT THE CITY CENTRE HOTEL CARLTON & ELLICE — UNIT 106		
WATCH WRESTLING CH. 9 CABLE 12 SATURDAY AND SUNDAY		

He had been British champ for a short time after beating Billy Joyce before going travelling.

As far as world championships are concerned Robinson did pick up one of the world title belts in the US, and did get to call himself a World Champion.

He emulated Dr X's feat of besting Verne Gagne in Hawaii for the AWA version of the World Title (and the flyer here is the '74 flyer for his big win), and he repeated the win in Canada a few months later. It was Gagne, though, who beat Robinson probably more times than anyone else. (Well, he was the promoter ...). Note Peter Maivia also on this bill.

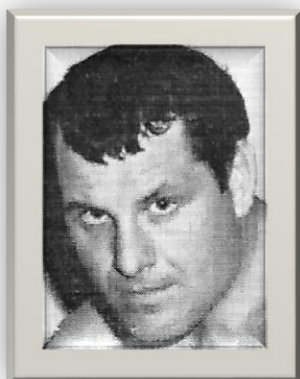
Like so many of the UK exports Billy Robinson found most success in tag matches, linking most of the time with Gagne. Having said that his solo bouts are fascinating. He battled the Funk brothers, Terry and Dory Jr for the World Title many times ... But almost every decision was a win by disqualification or a draw. So no title changes there, then.



In Australia and Japan he picked up world title versions. In Japan his win was over Billy White Wolf (L), who was also no stranger to UK rings. In Japan Billy White Wolf teamed a lot with Dazzler Joe Cornelius and a couple of times with Mike Marino. There was quite a club of wrestlers schooled in the UK wrestling travelling the globe together.

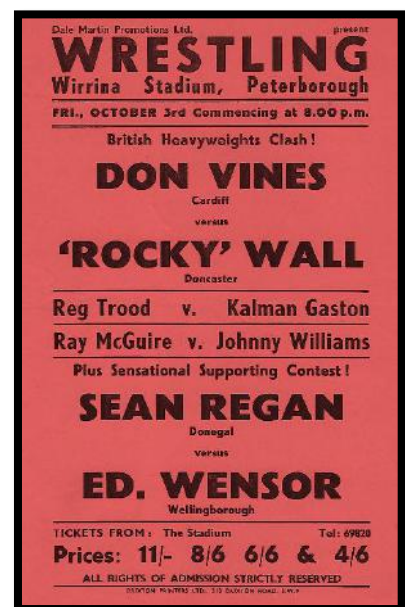
Members of that club included Geoff Portz, Albert Rocky Wall and Sean Regan. Robinson kept Wall busy in the UK in the early sixties, and in Japan the two were

matched many times, culminating in Robinson beating Wall to the IWE European Championship in Japan at the end of the decade. Wall had been three-time winner of the British heavyweight Championship, but world titles eluded him. His following in Japan and the US was very loyal ... as it was for all the UK visitors.



Likewise, Sean Regan (L) travelled a great deal with

Robinson, mostly as one half of the opposing tag team. Most of Regan's work was done in Japan and Canada. In Japan he faced Antonio Inoki on more than one occasion, and in Canada tagged with the Mighty John Quinn, who would be the man to set British wrestling aflame when he came over.





Geoff Portz was a great one for the German tournaments as well as Japan and the US. In the US he, too, faced Inoki, many times in tag matches with the great Welshman Tony Charles (L) as his partner.

It was at Stampede that Portz (R) made his biggest mark, rising to become Stampede North American Champion in the 70s, before dropping the belt to Kendo Nagasaki and setting off back to the German tournaments.



Nagasaki's Stampede days are well documented in Heritage. The difference between Portz and Nagasaki was that Nagasaki didn't crack the US scene.

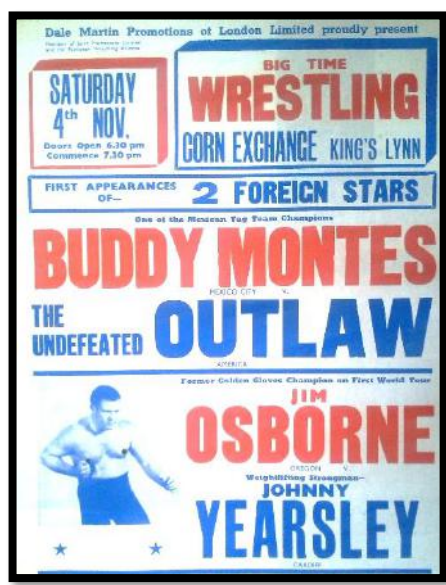
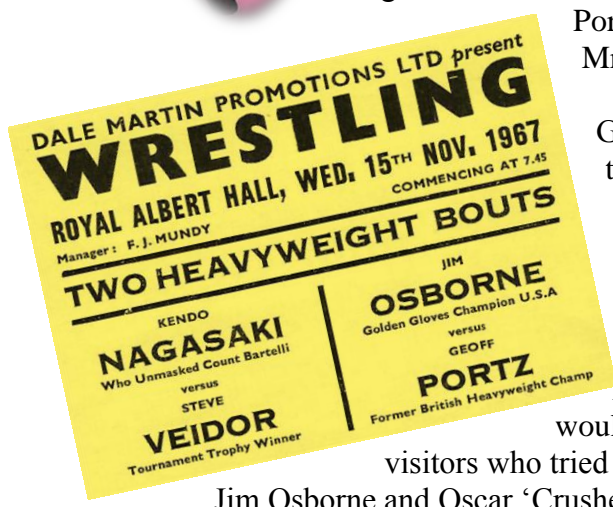
Portz certainly did, much of the time as Mr X.

Geoff's career was a remarkable one ... starting in the fifties in the UK and ending in the eighties in Florida. We didn't get to see enough of Portz once he left these shores, but having seen him a few times I know anyone who did watch him perform would have left the stadium in awe.

In the UK any American visitors in the mid sixties would be tested by Portz, and here are two examples of visitors who tried ... and they did try ... to become draws here.

Jim Osborne and Oscar 'Crusher' Verdu.

Jim Osborne's trek over here in '67 was a weird one. Joint Promotions must have had a lot of faith in his ring presence, but it's fair to say it didn't surface.



The flyer above was his finest UK hour when he faced Portz at the Royal Albert Hall, and walked away the victor.

He was also on the same bill that saw the Outlaw face Mexico's Buddy Montes in Kings Lynn (L). His opponent was Johnny Yearsley, and the Welshman duly went down to our visitor.

But that's about it for the good news regarding Jim Osborne.

It was clear he was little more than a journeyman US wrestler who never really ‘got’ the UK way of doing things. The self-same Outlaw despatched Osborne back to the States with a ignominious 2-0 victory.

Returning to the US in 1968 he was back as a support act (R). On this bill he’s facing Jim Grabmire with Les Thatcher and Lee Hennig on the bill. These four travelled round a lot together with Roger Kirby, who we saw facing Pat Barrett in San Jose.



Grabmire, another wrestler who started in the early fifties and wrestled into the 1980’s, carved out a good career in Japan. Thatcher became a respected trainer. Osborne never really hit the heights and ended his career as yet another Dr X. To give him due, he did, however, win the NWA Gulf Coast Heavyweight Championship with the Dr X mask in place.

Oscar Verdu was a slightly different kettle of fish.



The Barcelona-born adonis first came to these shores in the early sixties for Paul Lincoln, having been voted one of the ‘*men most likely to*’ in the States. Who could forget that “King of All I Survey” photo which graced the posters (L)? In ’64 and ’65 he banked more European experience and then returned here.

If ever the highlife took its toll on a physique, Oscar ‘Crusher’ Verdu is the prime example. The returning grappler did not resemble the photo; Let’s put it that way. Joint Promotions clearly had a path in mind and his debut was a Royal Albert Hall win over Dennis Mitchell. Quite an accolade.

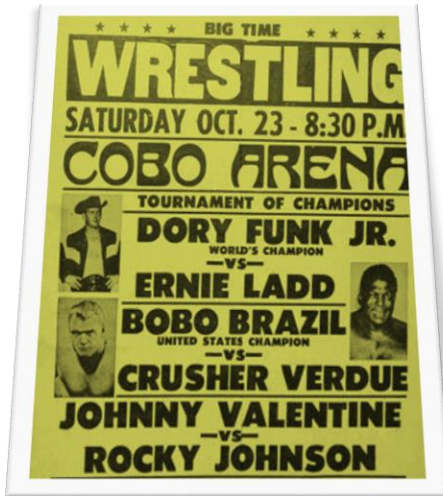
Alas, things did not quite go the way of the plan ... that is, if the plan was to elevate Mr Verdu to big star status. The Albert Hall result does not reflect the subsequent trips around the country that Verdu made. Defeats to all and sundry. Steve Veidor, Gordon Nelson, Mike Marino, Judo Al Hayes, Geoff Portz, Billy Robinson, Pat Barrett, Peter Maivia (see what I mean about the Stateside Club?). Down he went to all of them.



Then ... what do you know? Back in the States his UK credentials turn him into an almost invincible operator. Win after win ... and he becomes one of the first wrestlers to have a high profile manager ...

Lou Albano (L). Albano’s racist goading of “that *x!^* Italian, Sammartino” saw Verdu sell out Madison Square Garden with a record attendance of 20,819. What’s more, a bloodied World Champion Bruno Sammartino is pulled out by the ref and Crusher Verdu rules the world. The return match broke the attendance record again! (20,982). This time Sammartino got his revenge, and the promoters began counting nearly 90,000 dollars’ profit.

(Madison Square Garden, of course, was the Mecca of wrestling. Billy Robinson only managed one appearance there, beating Johnny Rodz in '75. Pat Barrett climbed into its ring nearly 20 times over the years).



Verdu continued as a headliner for some time, facing Sammartino again and again but failing to lift the belt. Most of the re-matches were back at the Garden. He was billed as having a record-breaking chest of 62 ¾ inches. (Big Daddy claimed between 62 and 64 inches ... but chests don't win titles, of course)



Verdu's attempt to lift the US belt from Bobo Brazil (L) ended in a double KO. They clashed a few times and all seem to have ended in knockouts or double

KO's. Before he retired he started replacing 'Crusher' with 'Killer', but his Sammartino days were well behind him.

Now I have a teaser for you. I don't know the year of this clipping but I suspect it is circa 1969/1970. It's a small-time promotion, which may be a clue to the answer, of course. It's taking place at the Akron Armory in Ohio.

But here we have one Oscar Vardun, teaming with Jack Cain to face the famous wrestling bear, called Victor. (There's a great YouTube video of Destroyer Dick Beyer commentating on a video of his own battle with the bear).

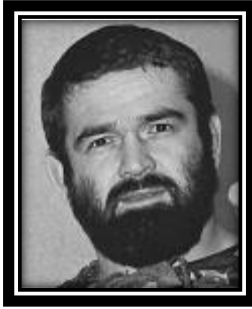
Verdu had his name printed in a multitude of different ways (see the Bobo Brazil flyer, above). So it could be our 'Crusher', or is it a deception attempt? The rest of the bill are certainly not headliners. Only Chief White Eagle, a popular down south grappler, means anything to me. The rest of the card is a bit of mystery; to me, anyway. I'm sure I'd have remembered the name Tuffy Trusdale if I'd come across it before!

So ... is this the 'Crusher'? He did certainly wrestle in Ohio now and again, but I can find no evidence of bear-baiting in Akron. No prizes, just the joy of research ... over which I have drawn a blank. So over to you.



I haven't set out to draw up an exhaustive list of travellers and visitors. Hayes, Finlay, Rocco, Thornton, Charles, Campbell, Street; of course, there are many more. I've only chosen ones where I've got relevant old clips and flyers and the like. But I'll finish with a guy who probably helped Golden Years UK wrestling live on for longer than it might have done by crossing the Atlantic and telling us what he thought of us!

The Mighty Quinn's arrival to these shores together with his verbal battering of the Brits is beautifully outlined in Heritage, along with his battles involving Kendo Nagasaki, Tony St Clair and Wayne Bridges.

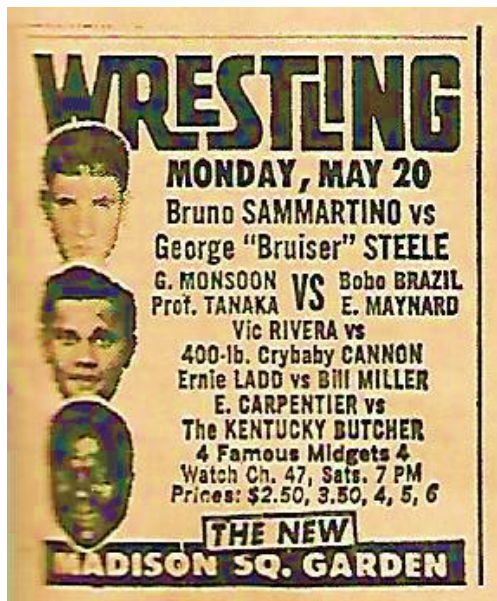


Fans in the UK never knew what to believe when an "American" arrived in town. Would they have a Northern accent, like Dwight J Ingleberg? Would they REALLY be a Golden Gloves champion, like Jim Osborn claimed? Were they REALLY big stars back home, a claim made by every one? Had they REALLY fought, maybe even beaten, the World Champion?

Well, with John Quinn we got the real deal in the UK. Here, we'll look at what he got up to in other countries. Quinn was a globetrotter with almost as many names as bases. Big John Quinn, Mighty John Quinn, Danny DuBois, Virgil, Kentucky Butcher, Stomper, Jack Clay, The Masked Spoiler, one of the Masked Yankees and even Little John (never quite understood that one!).



His carbon footprint would have horrified the Green Party! Born in Canada, Quinn debuted there under the wing of Whipper Billy Watson in '61 and flip-flopped between Canada and the WWF in the States, where his battles against Bruno Sammartino became the stuff of legend. He was a big name in Stampede and had a following at the IWE in Japan, as well as the European tournaments in Germany and Austria. After his UK barnstorming in the late 70s it was back to Canada and Germany before retirement. He and Wayne Bridges kept their friendship going until Quinn died in 2019 aged 77 after complications following surgery.

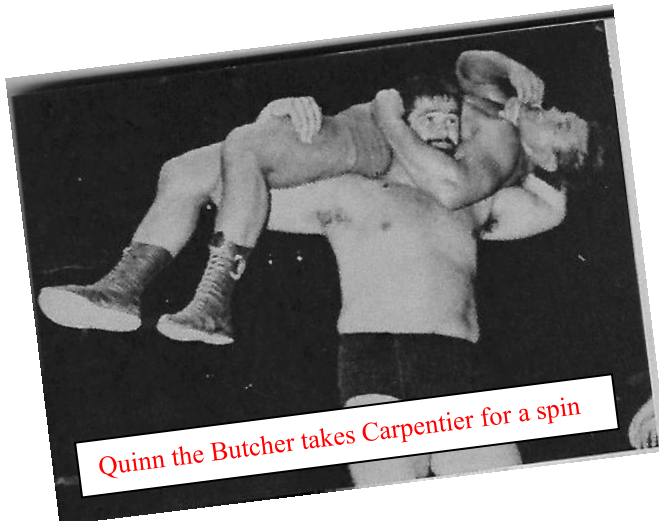


In the late 60's Quinn, as Kentucky Butcher, notched up a notable victory at Madison Square Garden (L) against Eduard Carpentier, and then went on to challenge Sammartino for the World Title at the Garden, losing by the one pin-fall.

Boston Garden was another favourite haunt for Quinn and he did notch up non-title wins against Sammartino there ... two of them by count-out. Sammartino and Quinn shared the ring many times, including tag matches. It was as a partner of Kurt von Hess that he won title honours,

and later when he was touring the UK he linked up with Pat Barrett, and the microphone skills of those two together was an event to behold.



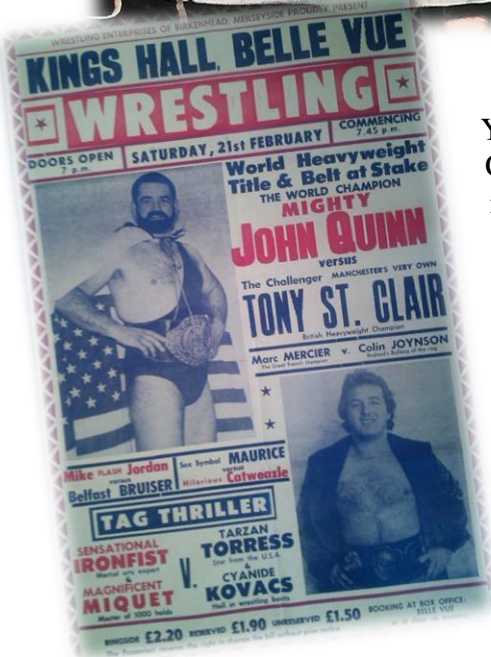


In 1968 the US Wrestler magazine devoted a ten-page special to a triple tag match at Boston Garden featuring Quinn as Kentucky Butcher and Sammartino. It was headlined "The Night Bruno Was Carried Out On a Stretcher!" A six-man tag match refereed by Two-Tony Galento, the boxer who put up such a good show against Joe Louis, and two others.

This was a three-out-of-five falls grudge match with three referees, and promoter Abe Ford reckoned the ring had to withstand 2,320 pounds! After Kentucky Butcher was hurled out of the ring, Gorilla Monsoon flattened Bruno with a chair and he was, indeed, carried out on a stretcher (below). So then it was three against two. Ten minutes to go to the curfew, Rivera and Carpentier were getting a beating ... and then a commotion at the back of the hall heralded a bloodied and

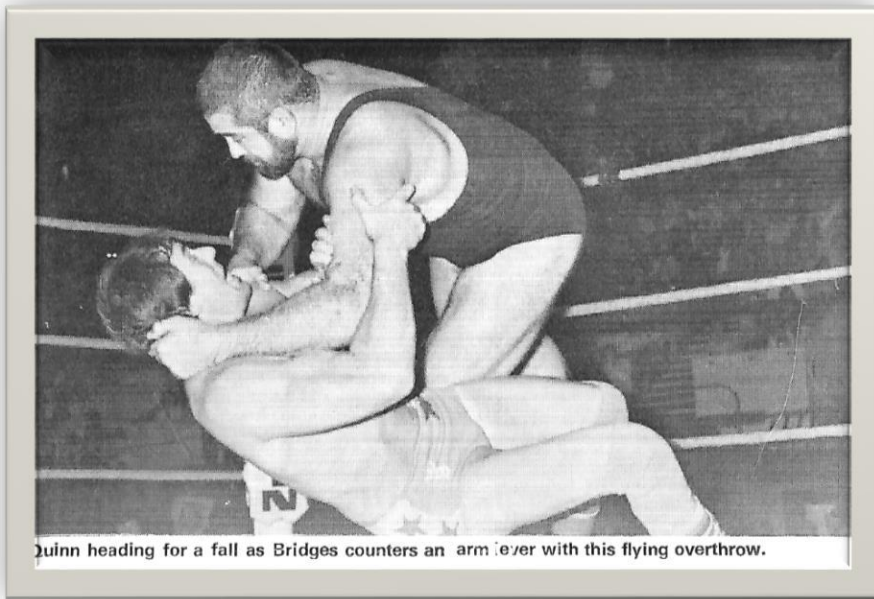


bandaged-up Sammartino who returned to the ring and lifted the monster Monsoon and slammed him to the canvas to get the winner in the final minute.



You can see from the flyer of Quinn against Carpentier and the line-up of this tag match that fans in the Garden were happy to see their favourites back week after week.

We'll wind up with a Quinn family photo and a couple of reminders of his UK marauding, because putting aside his two-minute knockout defeat by Big Daddy (which Wayne Bridges put down to Quinn landing on broken glass) he was a real value-for-money operator. The Tony St Clair and Wayne Bridges matches filled halls, and fuelled the Golden Years as they came to a close.



Quinn heading for a fall as Bridges counters an arm lever with this flying overthrow.

WRESTLING ENTERPRISES OF BIRKENHEAD, MERSEYSIDE PROUDLY PRESENT

LIVERPOOL STADIUM

WRESTLING

BOOKS OPEN 7 p.m. FRIDAY, 6th MARCH COMMENCING 7.45 p.m.

THIS IS THE BIG ONE — CLASH OF CHAMPIONS

MIGHTY JOHN QUINN
World Heavyweight Champion

versus

TONY ST. CLAIR
Noble Heavyweight Champion

NICKEY GOLD v. Barry Douglas

★
★
★

Mike Shannon v. Belfast Bruiser

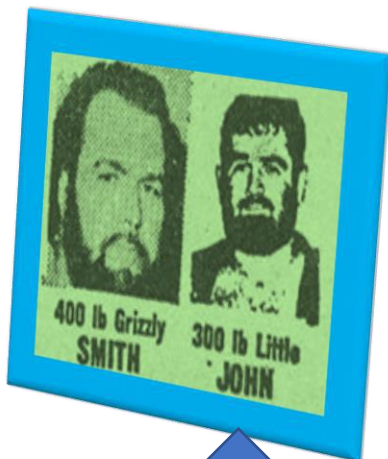
WHAT A CONTEST

CRUSHER MASON
22 Stone Ace

versus

STEVE YOUNG
Bad boy of the ring

Seats £1.50 £1.40 £1.20 BOOKING AT BOX OFFICE, LIVERPOOL STADIUM, at all times of evening.

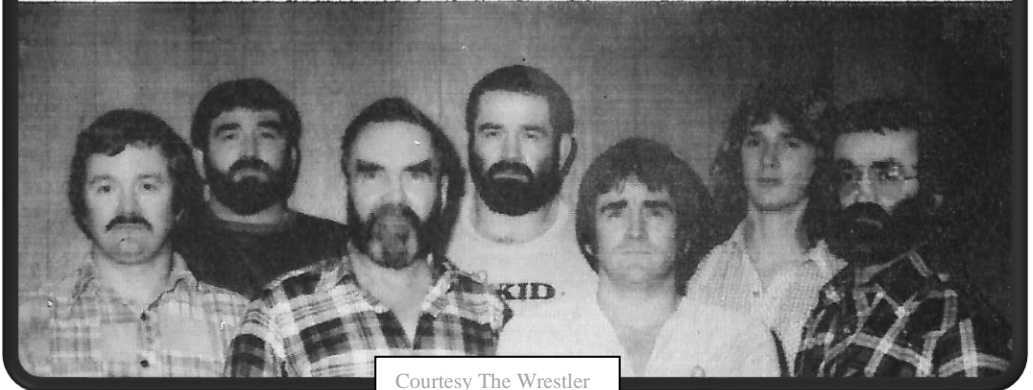


Just in case you didn't believe me about the Little John bit!

Meet the man who started it all

It is now wrestling history that when John Quinn first appeared on British Television he repeated the insults that his father had said about the British Public. The thought shared by all the Quinn family seen here from left to right: Michael Anthony - 6ft 2ins, 230

lbs; Stephen Patrick - 6ft 4ins, 260 lbs; Father Frederick- 6ft 2ins, 220 lbs; Might John - 6ft 5ins, 290 lbs; Timothy James - 6ft, 190 lbs; Kevin Peter - 6ft 4ins, 210 lbs (baby) and David Frederick - 6ft 2 ins, 233 lbs (eldest) plus 3 sisters.



Courtesy The Wrestler

And finally

A reminder of the times Our Billy was the second most popular wrestler in the world as voted by U.S. fans ... not UK ... and second only to Sammartino

