

PHOTOS BY NATE WAGNER STORY BY NEAL OBERMEYER



MONDAY MONDAY MONDAY



WCW offers surreal night of alcohol, sweaty wrestlers, rowdy fans and mindless fun

Cheering fans surround the action of WCW Monday Nitro as Goldberg throws I.M. Smooth into the ropes. Goldberg went on to pin Smooth easily, adding to his winning streak.

Riley Peterson and I start The Official Pro Wrestling Experience in similar fashion to The Official Thursday Night Downtown Experience: With two double shots of vodka, talking about the evening to come.

I want to see Sting. Riley wants to see blood.

While walking to Pershing, I feel a little sick to my stomach. Is it nerves or the double vodkas?

The old man at the door looks at our DN press passes, looks up at us and asks "Journal Star?"

We pass Crowbar and Daffney signing autographs in the hall, where grown men cut in front of children. The media seating turns out to be an empty 300-seat section with cameras and lights.

But first, I see the face paint from across the room. I see the long black coat. It's STING!

Actually it's Jason Kolbo from Lincoln in full Sting attire. He had camped outside for tickets.

Announcer Dave Penzer attempts to warm up the crowd. Some guy throws out some free T-shirts. The 10 people who caught them think he's cool. The other 4,000 don't.

Riley buys his first and last beer for \$3.50.

In the bathroom, a drunken man stumbles in and WHOOPS in Ric Flair fashion. The kid at the urinal next to me runs out in fear.

Then, by the ring, the build, the eyebrow ... but he shouldn't be here! THE ROCK!

Nope. It's Joe Erdkamp, one of the event staff. A friend of his hooked him up with the job. I asked him if he was even interested in wrestling. "A little, but I'm more interested in acting," he says.

Oh, well never mind then. I'll find someone else.

"In our own way, we all kind of look like wrestlers," Riley says.

The media section is a surreal, isolated realm that is more like watching IMAX wrestling than a live event.

Much of the night is spent watching the big television screen. It's a shame the fans at home are missing this. They have to stare at a much smaller screen.

Many fans hold up their home-made signs. Other fans hold up their children.

The first live segment includes the unfortunate return of the character Oklahoma, whose sole purpose is to taunt us, the horde of identical Husker fans. Sid Vicious rushes out to the ring in tight stonewashed jeans and a denim vest. This is what the fans want.

We go to a commercial, and the Nitro Girls come back. DJ Ran wants to hear us say "Ah-WOOO!" I see them, and for some reason I can't help but think of the Village People. Should I be worried, or should they?

Up there, in section 7 ... that shaved head, that group of friends ... it's WADE GOERING, the guy who punched my best friend in high school! Along with many others in attendance, he is a WWF fan who just wants to watch wrestling. And drink beer.

So Elix Skipper, one of the three American members of Team Canada, takes on Crowbar for the Saskatchewan Hardcore International Title. Because of interference and crowd hatred of all things Canadian, he can't win S.H.I.T.

The Cat comes to make fun of announcer Mark Madden for being fat. Making fun of fat people actually is quite funny.

At this point, I'm pumped, adrenaline flowing. The show is going great. Either that, or it's the double vodkas.

I spot Sting in the audience, along with a Jesus and Kent Wolgamott. They're not together.

Three Count, the wrestling boy band, comes out to face Diamond Dallas Page and Kevin Nash. These two

old-timers could murder puppies and still get a huge crowd reaction, and of course, they do. Get a huge crowd reaction, that is. No one wants to see a good match here. The fans want to see a slaughter and finishing moves.

A special tingle goes down my spine when I watch someone get Diamond-cut. On Thursday night, I Diamond-cut my friend Brian to show off for a WCW truck driving through town. He got a special spine tingle, too.

Reno wrestles next. He's Italian, and he has a gambling gimmick. Ironically, the Jung Dragons are Asian, and they have a kung-fu gimmick.

Next is the inevitable Goldberg match. The crowd goes insane, but it takes all of 75 seconds to end. Goldberg spent more time walking up the ramp than he did wrestling. And he gets the biggest response of the night. Maybe it's because he breathes smoke while standing in big sparklers.

The poignant DJ Ran plays "Smack My Bitch Up," while the Nitro Girls dance in cages.

Amber Peterson's boyfriend bought her a ticket to the show. I ask her how it feels to be one of the only women in the building. She scans the area as she replies. "I'm not the only girl here ..."

Scott Steiner makes his way to the ring for the main event. Steiner taunts the fans, and they respond by holding up their middle fingers and children.

Steiner wins and then all sorts of stuff goes down. So much that for the first time in a while I snap out of media zone and get excited again. What a finish! I'm ready to go HOME! No! There's still another hour or two for the taping of WCW's Wednesday night show. And there's still that something about sitting in the media section that doesn't seem real. The cameras show what we see: one angle of everything. And so the next 90 minutes are a blur. Blame it on the section, the length or the Jack Daniels Lynchburg Lemonade. But there was no longer any point for me or most of the crowd.

The Jung Dragons (the Asians) wrestle Team Canada. The crowd chants "USA." What? Then Alex Wright wrestles Buff Bagwell, and the crowd chants "Let's go Huskers!" Riley yells for them to stop. "You're confusing the wrestlers!"

Marilyn Patzloff is a door guard. She tells me that the main difference between a wrestling show and a regular Pershing event is the level of alcohol consumption.

She has worked backstage, where she got to see a little more of what went on. "To be honest, I wasn't impressed," she says. "To me, it's a show. It's not wrestling."

TOP: Jeff Jarrett, a 14-year veteran of professional wrestling, makes an appearance on WCW Monday Nitro to wrestle Konnan, armed with his trusty guitar that doubles as a weapon.

CENTER: Beer-toting WCW Nitro fans Clint Tress and Brian Boyce cheer during Monday Nitro held at Pershing Auditorium. Fans drank beer and flailed signs in favor of or against the daunting wrestlers.

BOTTOM: Kevin Nash holds Shannon Moore of 3COUNT in the corner by choking him with his boot. Nash and Diamond Dallas Page went on to beat 3COUNT for the Tag Team title but had to give back their title belts because of an error they made in pinning the wrong man last week on PayPerView.



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