

## MISAWA PASSES AWAY AFTER BACKDROP IN HIROSHIMA MATCH

Mitsuharu Misawa, one of the greatest pro wrestlers of all-time, was declared dead at 10:10 p.m. Saturday night at a hospital in Hiroshima from an apparent heart attack after being given a back suplex in a tag team title match.

Misawa would have turned 47 on June 18th.

Misawa, the president of Pro Wrestling NOAH, was teaming with Go Shiozaki in a match challenging Bison Smith & Akitoshi Saito for the GHC tag team championship in Hiroshima. Misawa was given the move at about 8:45 p.m. and knocked unconscious. They were about 27 minutes into the match when the referee immediately stopped the match seeing what had happened.

According to eye witness reports, Saito gave Misawa a "routine" back suplex that was described as a "7" in danger on a scale of one-to-ten. He did not get up. It was chaos in the ring as they attempted to revive him using CPR and the crowd was hushed for a while, and began a "Misawa" chant. He turned purple in the ring and was rushed to the hospital in an ambulance.

His heart stopped beating in the ring.

The wrestlers were told on the bus that he had passed away.

While it is being reported that he passed away at the hospital, he may have actually passed away in the ring.

Misawa was the Japanese high school national wrestling champion at 187 pounds in 1980, and was recruited by Giant Baba into All Japan Pro Wrestling. He gained his first taste of stardom in 1984 when he was chosen to be the second Tiger Mask. After unmasking in 1990, he became an even bigger star after a series of singles matches with Jumbo Tsuruta.

He was Japan's biggest pro wrestling star of the 90s, and one could make a strong case for him as the top wrestler of the decade. He was the Wrestler of the Year in 1995, 1997 and 1999.

After the death of Shohei "Giant" Baba, Misawa wrestled a little over one more year for All Japan Pro Wrestling, while working as company president. After consistently butting heads with owner Motoko Baba, the widow of Shohei Baba, he and 90% of the All Japan roster quit the company to form Pro Wrestling NOAH.

The movie "The Wrestler" opened tonight in Japan. Because of the finish of the movie, this has become part of the story in some outlets in Japan.