

MSG Classics TV report - Superstar Graham vs. Dusty Rhodes

Our second MSG Classics this week is the card from September 26, 1977. An overflow crowd of 22,102 in the Garden and Felt forum turned out to see WWWF World Champion "Superstar" Billy Graham defend against "The American Dream" Dusty Rhodes. Our announcer will be Vince McMahon. Michael Cole take notes.

The show kicks off with Vince McMahon interviewing Bob Backlund in the ring. Backlund is less than a year away from his marathon world title run and is being billed as undefeated. I never got what Backlund's appeal was, especially to cynical New Yorkers with his dopey personality. He's got a Diego Sanchez-type of weirdness to him, but much dorkier. Backlund then faces "Pretty Boy" Larry Sharpe who looks like he could be related to Buddy Rose. Vince McMahon says the word "keester." This was practically a squash as Backlund wins with an atomic drop (no really) in 9:04 to continue his undefeated streak. Sharpe wouldn't do much in the ring during his career, but his Monster Factory wrestling school has trained the likes of Raven, Sonjay Dutt, Bam Bam Bigelow, The Godfather, The Big Show, Tony Atlas and King Kong Bundy among others. Our main event is

next, with Graham defending against Rhodes. Rhodes is way over with the crowd. They tease lock ups and a few tests of strength to start things off. Dusty gets the early upper hand with a hip toss and some elbows and the crowd loves it. Graham is absolutely shredded but does a great job of selling for Dusty. Graham teases walking out before we get another WWWF test of strength. Dusty gets some elbows in and taunts Superstar some more. The crowd is so in to Rhodes I'm surprised he wasn't used in New York more often, though that may have been his choice.

Long headlock by Graham followed by a long bear hug. Dusty managed a brief comeback and back dropped Graham over the top rope and Graham just took the count out in 15:38. Pretty good match with tons of heat. The crowd loved Dusty. After the match, Rhodes celebrates with the belt until he's informed the title doesn't change hands on a count out. Dusty got on the mic and told Graham, "Superstar, I came a long way to whip your ass!" 20 years before Steve Austin. Graham would beat Dusty in a Texas Death Match the following month before Rhodes settled into the midcard. They would feud again the following summer after Graham dropped the title to Backlund. Finally we have "High Chief" Peter Miavia vs. George "The Animal" Steele. You might have heard that Miavia is The Rock's grandfather. This match is all stalling and Steele doing his comedy routine. Steele is supposed to be severely mentally challenged, however, he manages to use a foreign object repeatedly and conceal it from the referee. So what's the diagnosis on the ref? Miavia won via count out in 13:19 because Steele was too stupid to get his foot untangled from the ropes. The Rest of the card: Cowboy Lang & The Haiti Kid defeated Little John & Little Tokyo 2 Falls to 0 Mr. Fuji defeated Lenny Hurst Baron Mikel Scicluna and Jack Evans fought to a Double Count Out Chief Jay Strongbow, Tony Garea, & Larry Zbyszko defeated Ken Patera, Stan Stasiak, & Capt. Lou Albano via referee's decision in a Best 3 out of 5 falls match; fall #1: Strongbow pinned Stasiak with a double chop to the throat at 10:40; fall #2: Patera pinned Zbyszko with a double axe handle off the top at 5:21; the match then went to an 11 pm curfew with the referee awarding the contest to Strongbow, Garea, & Zbyszko Attendance figures and undercard info courtesy of www.thehistoryofthewwe.com Chris Marullo