

HEAT SHEET



ISSUE #12

June 2020
(W)retrospective
Heat Seeker
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Coming Up

A Letter from the Editor

Well, it has been a month.

A few weeks ago, we thought we would be writing an editorial about the way Australian wrestlers had got behind Black Lives Matter and were donating their merch proceeds to local and overseas organisations, supporting causes in that space. Being a wrestler in Australia is not going to make you rich, and that so many people in and around the community were prepared to forego a source of income, at a time when they needed it was enormously positive. That they were doing it in order to give some tangible support to helping make the world a fairer more egalitarian place said wonderful things about this community.

And then wrestling internet discussions decided to go in another direction.

An important direction.

A direction that it needed to go in and that will hopefully, in time, make the wrestling community a better, safer more inclusive place, but... it's been a month.

Which is a slightly obtuse way of us apologising for not getting our June issue onto the virtual news stand until July.

This will also be our shortest issue for a while. Having said that, I was cleaning out the Heat Sheet email tray recently and came across the message we sent out to wrestling promotions just over a year ago, pitching the idea for the magazine. What we thought we would be doing was 6-8 pages per month incorporating a results recap and maybe a spotlight on a particular wrestler. It turns out things don't always go as planned in wrestling.

Which is a slightly obtuse way of saying, I won't apologise for this being a slimmer issue, after all, it's been a month.

Matt McQueen.

Our cover this issue

Let's not beat around the bush here. It has been pretty heavy recently, in wrestling and in the world at large. Our cover is our attempt to remind us all of the mad crazy joy that wrestling can bring us, and we could think of none better to convey that than the Eco Warriors, Combat Wombat and Outback Adam (with Steve).

*Photo from AWA: Holiday Hell

Jake Nova: (W)retrospective Part 2

When I turned to Facebook to offer suggestions about what matches needed to be watched as part of a Jake Nova (w)retrospective, there were there were a few recurring themes, and none of them were particularly surprising.

I had heard about Jake Nova, and Jake Nova v Will Ospreay, before I had even seen any local wrestling. It was a match whose existence sent ripples out into the wider wrestling community. I had missed Nova v Eagles at 2019's Beers and Bruises, but that was a match which, by all accounts, the entire AWA roster had asked to be held last because they didn't want the pressure of having to follow it. It was Bobby Bishop who suggested I look into the long and storied history of Nova v Rip Rielly, and it was Jesse Daniels (showing that sometimes it is not all about him) who suggested Nova v Rip v Tim Kade at AWA: Revolution, the night Nova won the title and started on his 400+ day reign.

Jake Nova v Will Ospreay - VPW: Jumping the Shark, Feb 2018

Will Ospreay the person is not always easy to like. He has a personal confidence that slips too easily into arrogance, and a world view (or lack of filter) that renders a good portion of his social media offerings as 'problematic'. But Will Ospreay the wrestler has spent the last five years on a steady rise to being arguably the best in the world. And Will Ospreay the Independent Wrestler has made a point of making that rise his own way, chasing improvement and opportunity rather than any particular contract.

He may not have been the best in the world when he took on Jake Nova at Venom Pro Wrestling in



Will Ospreay does not stay still long enough to get a decent screenshot.

February of 2018, but he was a genuine star, and the support he got from the crowd made that clear. Credit has to go to Venom for getting him to Queensland, and credit to Ospreay for making the journey, but once here, there was only really one person who you could match him against.

The story of this match was clear: it was Ospreay's speed, elusiveness, and crispness against the power of Jake Nova. Ospreay is not a small guy, but it was obvious early that Nova had him covered for sheer firepower. Ospreay would hit three, four, five times for every blow landed by Nova, but he had to, because when Nova hit him it left him reeling.

Briefly.

And if I am being honest, it was the brevity of the impact of Nova's offence that stopped this from being my favourite match. It is not fair to say that Ospreay didn't sell, he did: every time Nova hit him with a power bomb, or a stiff right or kick, it stopped him and he felt it, and he paused long enough to make it clear he had felt it. But every time he shook it off, and soon enough was buzzing around the ring again, with no apparent long term effects from the blows that he was taking.

In many ways it was a fairly even match. Both wrestlers got in enough offence to win it, but it seemed that nothing Nova could do managed to clip Ospreay's wings. He was still moving at the finish as crisply and smoothly as he had been at the start, and by the end it felt a little like he had been toying with Showtime all along. Nova showed that he could hang with Ospreay for over 25 minutes, but from about the fifteen minute mark, it didn't feel to me like he could win it.

Jake Nova v Rip Rielly v Tim Kade – AWA Revolution: Grindhouse, April 2018

Todd Eastman has been working through the AWA/AWL back catalogue, editing and posting matches to YouTube, but at the time when I sent out the request for suggestions, Nova's title-winning effort in AWA's first event at the Zoo in April 2018 was still in the 'to do' tray. Eastman was kind enough to move it up the schedule and send me a rough cut, and what I saw was perhaps one of the most horrific and disturbing matches I have ever seen.

On any given day you could make a case for any of these three to be the most talented wrestler in Queensland. Kade hits harder than a man of his size should. Rielly, who came into this match as champion, has an athleticism that belies his size. Nova sits between the two, able to move or maul with anyone, and all three have a level of mongrel ring-savvy that they can bring to bear when needed. So what we get is a hardcore match on the very edge of what I can watch without peeking through my fingers.

Chairs come out early, and all three take a seat in the centre of the ring to trade blows in a ring-a-ring-a-rose of stiff punches. When that is done, the chairs stay, to become so much shrapnel in an ever expanding explosion of violence.

The action leaves the ring and finds itself briefly at the bar for a drink, then at the side windows as first Rielly, then Nova try to throw Kade to the street below.



Sometimes Jake Nova likes to sit quietly by himself and contemplate world peace.

Back in the ring all three wrestlers (and Rielly's cornerman Flashman) get a bundle of skewers to the forehead, in a spot that will be revived 20 months later for Purge 2020 (see our cover issue Seven.)

Tacks, bins, chairs, tables. Nova piggybacking Flashman to the top rope before a sit down powerbomb that puts them both through a table. Tim Kade thrown headfirst out of the ring by the champion.

When Nova wins after a chair shot and being put through the same chair, it is genuinely a relief.

Jake Nova v Robbie Eagles - Beers and Bruises, September 2019

This is not the only time that Nova and Eagles had faced each other in the ring: in September 2018 they had fought in a fatal four-way with Adam Brooks and Rufio, a match that had seen the AWA Champion Jake Nova come out on top. This bout had them arguably at the height of their powers. This was Jake Nova, no longer AWA champion but with a point to prove, and Eagles NJPW star.

And this was a very different match to the last.

The Ospreay match had been about proving that Jake Nova could 'hang' with one of the fastest rising stars in world wrestling. This match was about finding out if the Sniper of the Skies could match the physicality and aggression of Showtime on his home turf. To establish if, for all his energy, he was mongrel enough to jump into the big dog's yard and drink from his water bowl. And both dogs were up for this fight.

The action went outside early, Eagles making use of the irregular shape of the Zoo and a smaller audience to take the action to the crowd, touring Nova around the venue with a series of chops and punches (I particularly enjoyed the expression on the face of Gen Next's Mitch Ryder as Nova's head was slammed into the merch table in front of him). Any attempt Nova made at a reversal was snuffed out as Eagles kept control early.



The top rope can be a dangerous place at the Zoo.

It was not until they got back into the ring that Nova managed to gain some momentum. An attempt by Eagles at a head scissors take down was stopped cold by Nova and turned into a brutal power bomb. A vertical suplex left Eagles flat on his back, and Nova's manager Todd Eastman (not previously a factor) began to make his presence felt.

In one of the high spots, Eagles managed to survive a German suplex, landing on his feet, only to be turned 450 degrees by the follow up clothesline.

Nova hit a standing moonsault.

Eagles hit a dropkick to the knee.

And somewhere in there this stopped being a wrestling match and became a fight.

Things got ragged, and Nova is in his element when things get ragged.

Robbie Eagles was impressive, but the match felt like it was being fought at Nova's pace, and on Nova's terms. This was a savvy wrestler making full use of his home court advantage.

Any attempt by Eagles to go to the top ropes saw him clubbed mercilessly back into the ring by his opponent. The obligatory trading of forearms was delivered, in this case with both wrestlers on their knees. This was soon surpassed by a frankly terrifying superkick exchange. Eagles' suicide dive through the ropes missed Nova completely, taking out a cadre of fans, only for Eagles to get straight back up and try to twist Nova's left leg around the middle rope.

Nova locked in a submission, and despite Eastman's input, Eagles got to the ropes.

The end, when it came, came quickly. Eagles locked in a calf crusher of his own, and the damage he had inflicted on Nova's leg over the course of the previous 20 minutes finally paid out, with Nova forced to tap out.

So there we have it: six Jake Nova matches that I suspect don't scratch the surface of what he can do. We have seen him as the fresh-faced young crowd favourite, fighting from beneath, and as the confident performer overcoming the wiles of a dastardly heel. We have seen him outlasting and out brutalising his opponents in a hardcore war of attrition, and we have seen him going toe-to-toe with two of the rising stars of international wrestling.

Nova doesn't currently hold a championship. When we last saw him he (along with Kade) were passing the torch to the fast-rising EC Diamond, but for the last few years Jake Nova has been the benchmark for Queensland wrestling. While there are is a pleasing field of performers rising to meet the challenge, I can't help thinking he will continue to be the benchmark for a little while yet.

*Photos are screenshots from the video of the matches, courtesy of Venom Pro Wrestling and AWA/AWL

An over examination of 'style': A Spotlight on Sebastian Matters

By Aisling Taylor

Being an individual in the modern age is almost impossible. Today everyone has an easily identifiable personality, (and if you don't know yours, take a BuzzFeed quiz) this occurs tenfold within wrestling. With only a few brands having the monopoly on being a household name, developing a unique identity and style is getting more and more difficult. And when you're a heel having a distinct style matters more than anything, and this is the case for the first heel I loved to hate: Sebastian Matters.



Sebastian Matters: Patron Saint of Shoeys, Chops and the colour Purple

When I say that Sebastian Matters is the first heel I loved to hate, I mean that. Before becoming, frankly, obsessed with the South East Queensland scene I treated babyfaces and heels as the personality flavour of the week. But at my first Venom show, when Sebastian Matters had his muscle beat up Renegade before the show for the world's easiest pin, I understood. In the moment all the snarky logic fell away, and I wanted more than anything for Renegade to get back up and put an end to Matters' gloating (especially since Matters was sitting on Bruisers shoulders being paraded around the ring). But that didn't happen, and I found myself seeking out matches just to see if Sebastian would get his comeuppance. Since

that first Venom show my wrath towards heels has only grown, I want GenNext to have their arrogant smirks to be wiped off their faces, and to see Jesse Daniels' precious Republic crumble.

So, in September when Xander Sullivan vs Sebastian Matters for the Openweight Title at AWA's Beers and Bruises was announced, I found myself wanting Sebastian to win so that I could then eventually watch him lose (which he did). And with more time for reflection than ever, I am trying to figure out what drew me to Sebastian Matters' heel style specifically, and how it played into one of 2019's best wrestling storylines.

Sebastian himself isn't sure when he fully developed his style, stating that it's a combination of things that feed into his win by any means necessary vibe. Without a catchy and eloquent way to describe himself I decided to do some research to come up with Matters' potential tagline.

First, I took a large scale or macro approach to the definition, Sebastian's core move set falls pretty easily into the striker category of wrestling. A Striker (according to a 2015 Bleacher Report article by Ryan Dilbert) is someone who uses their punches, kicks and chops, not only to use strikes as setups for bigger moves but also utilizes strikes as highlights on their own, to gain the upper hand in matches. Combining speed, intensity, and realism in a move (plus some creativity) can set apart a cookie cutter wrestler from one with a refreshing flair. There is a reason that The Undertaker is arguably the most famous striker, – even after his countless number of 'retirements' – because his move set is iconic and immediately recognizable. Something almost all notable strikers have in common are versatility and aggression, things that Matters has in spades. In every match he is in you believe he will do everything in his power to win.

Defining Sebastian Matters as a striker on a macro level lends many descriptors that will come in handy later on. But for the moment the next aspect of Matters' that needs to be analysed is his attitude outside the ring, as part one of my two

phase micro view. If this breaks Kayfabe for you too much feel free to skip this section. It takes little more than a glance at Sebastian to identify how passionate and driven he is. In the last year there were a number of opportunities to train with different wrestling mentors, and Matters took almost all of them. When Davis Storm was in town for PWL's Day of Reckoning, Sebastian was at his workshop, when given the opportunity to train with wrestlers at PWA, Sebastian took it. He even made the choice to return to New Zealand's Fale Dojo for a second time to continue his wrestling growth, with plans to return to finish his second term when the world is less insane. He is committed to continually improving his craft and everyone I asked talked about how hardworking he is. This hunger and dedication to being the best he can be absolutely comes across in the ring, whether he is in a fake beard and Kung Fu headband or in a hardcore match, he gives it his all. Where this hunger originated, I cannot say, but combined with him not having the stereotypical 'wrestler' body type, he is automatically the angry underdog, even with a title.

The second part of my micro investigation and the final aspect that creates the 'whole' Sebastian Matters is his in ring vibe, his character choices and his demeanour in a match. In the ring Matters' heel nature comes forward in the form of arrogance. He knows he matters, and he needs everyone else to know as well. This arrogance mixed with the striker aggression I mentioned earlier makes



Sebastian spent most of 2019 trading blows with Xander Sullivan, but they never got bored of hitting each other

Sebastian unpredictable in ring. You can't say exactly what he will do but you know he will do what he needs to do to win. This was proven in the final instalment of his trilogy with Xander Sullivan, the Three Stages of Hell match at AWA's Holiday Hell, the only show last year where Matters entered as the champion. Sebastian conceded the first stage of the match to insure a victory in the second stage. I you haven't seen the trilogy it's all online now and definitely worth checking out.

Now back to my original goal: figuring out why Sebastian Matters was a big part of a very successful storyline in 2019, and providing an easy sentence to explain him as a wrestler, (explaining him as a person is infinitely harder, takes more work and I'm not going to do it). In the case of his contribution to wrestling in 2019 the answer is obvious: he is a great foil to Xander Sullivan's hardworking boy next door vibe, and schemed consistently to do as little dirty work himself as possible in his arc with Renegade, making him a very believable nemesis for both men. For a definition of his style I have looked at the macro and two micro components of Sebastian's character, folding in backstage and in ring personalities. And it has just occurred to me that in retrospect I have written an analytical debate speech. This is literally the essay structure I use for essays in my sociology/history degree. Whoops. In any case I think I can propose a definition of Sebastian Matters style, first the long definition:



A blurry photo of Heat Sheet founders Matt McQueen and Aisling Taylor

While not being able to describe his own style, I would argue that Former Openweight Champion Sebastian Matters style is similar to many great strikers before him, but above all else conveys his hunger and drive to win at all costs. One might underestimate Matters because of his size, but if he feels provoked or feels cornered, he will wrestle with a hunter like focus who takes no prisoners.

And the short definition: don't get into a ring with Sebastian Matters unless you can guarantee you will win, and even then, you can't know for sure.

For someone who has been wrestling for a decade Sebastian Matters' commitment to progress is admirable, especially as he used to wrestle as 'Sebastian Maximus'. Good call on the name change Seb.

*Photos courtesy of Barb's Photos and Callum Rule Media What's Coming Up

Heat Seeker: *Kiwi Thriller*

Q: All time favourite wrestler

Going to have to go with the best there is, the best there was, and the best there ever will be. If you don't know who that is, you're not a wrestling fan.

Q: All time favourite match

Any of the old school 90s Royal Rumbles

Q: Where, when and with whom did you start training?

Began training at the "Sweat Shop" with the legendary Peter "Hawk" Ball back in 2010. The Godfather of Queensland wrestling and IPW Australia founder. Taught me so many things, along with Ashe, Sweet Ass and Skhorn.

Q: When did you make your debut?

Debuted maybe a month or two after training against a guy named "Tenacious", had the opening match, and heard it was alright. He went on to become a referee.

Q: What is your favourite match you've been in?

To me its not just the matches, but being in a feud that's more memorable. My favourite feud was with BJ Blade where we had great matches over a 10 month span. He defeated me for the Heavyweight Title by literally knocking out my teeth. I gained my redemption after I recovered, winning the title back.

Q: What is your favourite move to perform?

Would have to be my Bro Kick. Simple to execute, no bumping involved, and I kick my opponent's head off.

Q: What titles have you held?

Pretty much all IPW has to offer. 2 X Heavyweight, 1 X South Pacific (now Unified) and 5 X Tag Champ.

Q: Who is your favourite opponent?

BJ Blade is a great worker. Skhorn makes you earn it. Luxford and Reaper are very athletic. Hard to pick just one, as they all bring something different to the table.

Q: Who is your least favourite opponent?

Probably Ben the Fan. The darkest moment of my wrestling life was when he beat me in his first match.

Q: Who has been the biggest influence on your career?

Personally The Sweet Assassin "Sweet Ass". Has a great mind for the business, has always backed me, and I wouldn't be a 5 X Tag Champ without him by my side.

Q: Describe yourself in three words.

Toothless, Big, Kiwi



Q: All time favourite wrestler

Apart from Sweet Ass - Bret "The Hitman" Hart.

Q: All time favourite match (to watch)?

Bret Hart vs Davey Boy Smith (Intercontinental Championship Match, Summerslam '92, Wembley Stadium, England).

Q: Where, when and with whom did you start Training?

WCW Australia Sweat Shop, Gold Coast, January 2000, with "The Hawk" Peter Ball.

Q: Where, when and against whom did you make your debut?

Arundel PCYC, Gold Coast, June 2000, singles match vs "The Canadian Wolf" (loss via pinfall after "The Howler" elbow drop).

Q: Your favourite match you've been in?

Junkyard Bash 2 (2003 I think?) on the Gold Coast. We wrestled with three cars around the ring, threw each other through windscreens, powerbombs on bonnets, attacked each other with aerials and tyre irons etc. It was mayhem, like being in a street riot, but a real adrenaline rush and I came through relatively unscathed. Junkyard Bash 4 the next time was a different story though I spent the night in hospital after super-kicking a car window and splitting my left shin/calf in half.

Q: Favourite Move to perform?

Back in the day, and as a singles wrestler, Sweet Ass's variation of The Harlem Hangover (flipping double leg drop off the top rope). Now that I'm mostly into tag wrestling – Inverted Electric Chair Buster/RKO tag finisher combo. It's brutal!

Q: What titles have you held?

WCWA Tag Team Title, Major Impact Wrestling Heavyweight title (x 3). Major Impact Wrestling South Pacific Title (x 1, but longest ever reign), Major Impact Tag Team Titles (Multiple), Major Impact Wrestling Hardcore Championship, IPW Australia South Pacific Title (Multiple Multiple),

Heat Seeker: *Sweet Ass* *(The Sweet Assassin)*

IPW Australia tag team titles (multiple, multiple, multiple).

Q: Favourite opponent?

Wrestling wise it's a tie between Cruz and BJ Blade in the early 2000s, as they were some of the best technical matches I had.

Q: Least favourite opponent?

Father Time, you just can't beat him!! So make the most of the time you have, people!!! That "three count on a career" is coming for all of us sooner or later.

Q: Who has been the biggest influence on your career?

The Ball Family ("The Hawk" Peter Ball and his sons Troy and Josh). The Hawk taught me the basics and taught me respect for the business and for the people. He also taught me how to be a "man's man" in and out of the ring, and to never forget about loyalty, especially to family. Troy taught me about intensity and psychology, and that it is not what you do but when that matters the most. Josh taught me about creating a legacy and the importance of having veteran wrestlers in the modern locker room and ring to pass their knowledge and wisdom on to the new generation. He also taught me about forgiveness, and that no-one is bigger than the business!

Q: Describe yourself in three words.

"The Derriere Extraordinaire"

When you have been around as long as the Sweet Assassin, you end up with a lot to say. We have had to cut it here for the magazine, but check out Heatseeker: Online for the full text and all the answers from these guys that we couldn't fit on two pages.

Coming Up

In normal times, 'What's Coming up' is a full page.

In normal times, 'What's coming up' has to cover four promotions all running shows in the coming month. These aren't normal times.

With the state moving to stage three restrictions though, gatherings of up to 100 are back on the table, and UPW's decision to have an HQ that is both gym and house show space looks almost prescient.

United Pro Wrestling will be at their Caboolture HQ on Saturday 18th July for their (somewhat unimaginatively titled) 'Caboolture is Back' show. It will be limited numbers and has already sold out, but it is live wrestling and we will be there, to watch Malibu v The Stockman for the UPW Championship, Cluck and Duck v The Circus of Tragedy for the Tag Team Belts, and Ricky Rembrandt v The Gospel Matt Gabriel, for the hell of it.



We look forward to sharing our thoughts on the return to live shows in our next issue.

Coming up in Heat Sheet

We are already working on future issues, and are looking forward to bringing you more Heat Seekers (both here and online), more Inside Voice more (W)retrospectives, and features on 'Going Overseas', and the 'Art of Wrestling'. In a move we might yet come to regret we have also had discussions with Jesse Daniels around a feature on The Daniels Republic, so stay tuned.

And another thing...

Returning to a theme we've touched on a few times, it is always a great time to show your support for local wrestling and local wrestlers by buying their merchandise. As well as wrestlermerch.com and prowrestlingtees.com, which we have previously highlighted, there is Red Bubble where you can now get Impact Pro Wrestling Merch at www.redbubble.com/people/ipw-australia/shop (as well as Wrestle Radio Australia merch.) And Lucille Brawl has just released a new shirt designed by Red Neck Kung Fu, that is frankly brilliant.

Our poster this issue

Everybody loves a circus.

Except for the animals, probably, and the guy who has to clean up after the animals, and the clowns, because there are dozens of them and they only have that one little car between them. OK, so lots of people don't love circuses.

But everybody loves, UPW's Circus of Tragedy.

Except for Cluck and Duck, and...



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