

Backyard Beginnings – A Short Story

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A Tale of Wrestling, Wedgies, and Wisecracks

The Introduction

The world of pro wrestling is a very strange place to be. Filled with towering men and women who claim to be pimps, soldiers, mafia gangsters, the undead, superheroes, rock stars, vampires and too many other characters to list. On camera, pro wrestling is a stage where the unbelievable happens, the world of pro wrestling is odd and entertaining, bizarre and exciting, and strange yet amusing. Behind the curtains, where the audience can no longer see them and the cameras are blind, these pimps and soldiers are just ordinary people. Now what kind of person becomes a pro wrestler? A unique person, to say the least. This world, the quirky world of professional wrestling, is a mixture of amateur wrestling, the local circus, and a daytime soap opera. This world is filled with average people playing lunatics, lunatics playing average people, or just lunatics playing themselves. But even though this world seems to be the peak of strangeness and offbeat shenanigans, there is another world, though much smaller, that even eclipses pro wrestling. I'm talking about the following known as backyard wrestling.

This is the story of my first true backyard-wrestling event.

It was early morning on a March day. The sun was hovering in the sky, free of blemishing clouds. On the ground the remainder of winter's snow was melting, only the occasional patch could be spotted here and there. Spring was well into making its long waited debut.

In a small town called Powassan, two teens rode their bikes up an ordinary road, stopping here and there to do an errand. The taller and heavier of the two, a teen named Adam Moore, was delivering papers. At fourteen, Adam was just over six feet tall, with curly brown hair and a somewhat goofy grin. With well over one hundred and seventy pounds on this paper carrier/hockey player, Adam was the perfect paperboy. He had no problem carrying thirty-some odd papers along a route.

Next to Adam was Stefan, the shorter and much lighter of the two. With long dark brown hair, a small goatee that was closer to the fuzz on an unripe peach, a five foot six frame, and just over one hundred and twenty pounds on him, he was far from the perfect paperboy. But deliver papers he did, everyday at lunch, running up a long steep hill to give out thirty-two papers in under half an hour.

They finished the paper route quickly, as a team, and then they began to bike home. Through the small trail to the little red bridge that crossed the river, and there Adam and Stefan talked.

"So what do you want to do now?" Adam asked as he leaned on his bike.

"I don't know man," Stefan replied slowly, the sun was relaxing.

"It's up to you..." Adam answered. Stefan thought for a moment, and then smiled a smile of victory. Adam grinned too, the way that only giants could.

"Hey, we could try wrestling," Stefan laughed. "Wouldn't that be awesome?" His eyes were sparkling; perhaps it was this that brought Adam in. Adam agreed, and together they biked off to Stefan's house.

And so it began.

Well, I had to introduce you somehow, even if that was a little cheesy. That day in the late March of 2001 was the foundation of my backyard and soon pro wrestling run. Usually, I'd throw in some comedy, but I feel that that piece needed to be told the way it was. Actually, I can't really remember the exact happenings of that day, so I just have to go off what I can remember. Maybe I've taken to many shots to the head. Come to think of it, I have taken quite a few, with various objects no less. Hell, here's a list of stuff that I've been hit in the head with while in a match, promo, or training session. These are only the objects; I don't think I could count how many times I've been hit with each.

Stuff Stefan has been hit in the head with: 2X4, 2X6, 2X4 wrapped in chicken wire, piece of partial board, metal chair, wooden chair, metal pipe, an eight foot plastic tube, cardboard box, bucket, paint bucket, ukulele, snow shovel, pool noodle, cooking grill, pool cue, pop bottle (with ice), cookie sheet, tree stump, icicle, tree branch, cookie tin lid, plastic toboggan, table, cooking pot, a shoe (without the foot), ladder, 2 ½ pound weight, child's tricycle, stop sign, saw horse, metal chain, and Mike Summerton's breath.

Without a shadow of a doubt the last was the worst shot I've ever received.

Actually, Mike Summerton was a friend of mine (though neither of us would admit it) and a solid all around wrestler. Unfortunately for him, he's going to be the butt of a lot of my jokes in this story. Mostly because he can't defend himself, but also just because he is fun to poke fun at. I'm sure someday he'll read this and hit me with something, which is all right with me, as long as he either keeps his mouth shut or buys some tic-tacs first.

Anyways, back to March. Adam rode back with me to my house, where we began to set everything up. I pulled out my black and white camera, a gift to me from Christmas a few years earlier, and hooked it up to the VCR. The camera was a small Tyco, it ran on six double A batteries, which it ate ridiculously fast. We opened the patio doors in the basement of my house and pulled the camera out through them. Then we made the "ring" which was actually just four patio chair cushions and a blanket. The problem with this, was that the cushions would sometimes move under us, creating gaps that led directly to the ground. But Adam and I did not care, we were set on wrestling, and as many pro or backyard (or byw for short) wrestlers will tell you, when you want to wrestle, you find a way to wrestle. So we turned on the camera and got started.

Almost everything we did was horrible. I still have the tape, a solid two hours long, of us just talking and trying to figure out what the hell we were doing. It was not a waste of time though, as we both had a lot of fun, and we both also found our "finishing" maneuvers. Adam's, a power move called the "choke slam" is common with bigger wrestlers. In the world of pro, most wrestlers using the move (three come to mind) are over six feet, eight inches tall. Adam was just over six feet tall, but he was still the biggest person there, so he could get away with using it.

So Adam used the menacing choke slam, a move in which Adam would grab me by the throat with his right hand, sling my arm over his, then would lift me by the throat, using his left hand to support me on the small of my back. As soon as the move reached it's peak, Adam would let go with his left hand, and still choking me, would slam me onto my back. Of course there are variations of the move, as there are for every move in wrestling, but this was the textbook version, and the one that Adam used.

I too found my finisher then, my own variation of a move called the Double-arm DDT. Cactus Jack made the move famous, and at the time he was my idol and hero (though not as much, he still is now), so I chose it as mine. My version of the Double-arm DDT would have me kick my opponent in the

stomach (as a set up), who would lean over. I would be on his right, and using my arms I would hook both of his arms behind his back (an underhook). Then I would throw both of my legs to the left, throwing my weight onto my opponent. He would fall forward, arms still hooked, and would land on his face/head for the finish. I still use the Double-arm regularly, despite changing my finisher in December of 2002. I used that move as a finisher for well over a year and a half, and still do as a solid regular move. When I do, I feel good, like the old Stefan. Maybe I should rename it the “old skool” Double-arm DDT. On second thought, that sounds just about as cheesy as a Mike Summerton promo.

Overall, March was fun, but not a good show. It’s hard to have fun and have a good show, as I realized later in December, when I totally forgot the “fun” part. But now I am ahead of myself. Adam and I had a good time, and pulled off a few good Double-arms and Chokeslams, among other moves. My mom, however, was not pleased.

My family supports me in my wrestling. Though they never really knew about all the things we did, my parents were fantastic about everything. That day was not a good way to start the support though. During our two hour set, we had left the patio doors wide open, so Adam and I could easily go inside and watch our matches and check to see if the camera was all right. We tracked in dirt, leaves, soil, and somehow a very large stick. My mother was not pleased, and she insisted that we clean up our mess. So our first fun streak had ended with a long boring part. Kind of like a Mike Summerton match.

So we cleaned up, watched the movie, laughing of course, and then departed. So was my introduction to backyard wrestling, and to the instruction manual of our new vacuum cleaner.

The First Event/The Dude/Stump Pulling

At school, I told two of my friends of my weekend. After some talk, we all decided that it would be cool to start wrestling. By “we” I mean the four of us. Adam, Daryl Good, Ryan Laird, and myself. Daryl Good, at thirteen, was around five-foot three, one hundred and thirty pounds, maybe. He had short black hair, and the same kind of goofy grin that Adam possessed. Daryl had a great sense of humor and was up for anything. Ryan Laird, who was really just a taller version of me, at five-foot nine, and around one hundred and twenty-five pounds, said that he would defiantly be coming down, along with Daryl. Ryan and I talked through weeks after weeks of classes about what we were going to do, and what moves we were going to use. There was no stopping us, the event was set for April 26th (my birthday), and everyone was coming.

As the days counted down, the three of us (Adam went to a different school) watched videos of other backyard federations (or feds for short). We watched clip after clip, to see what they were doing. We were getting mentally pumped.

Ryan decided he would use the “STO” as his finisher, a move better known as the Rock Bottom. While facing the opponent, Ryan would put his hand on their left shoulder, and then would hook their arm over his (much like Adam’s chokeslam). He would then lift them into the air, and falling forward would plant his opponent on their neck/back. I don’t think Daryl ever chose a finisher, or used one until December.

And we talked. I’m actually surprised we didn’t burn out all of our inspiration before the 26th, because we talked about everything. We even began to dig up old stuff we had done. One day, we stumbled across the long forgotten and much coveted character known simply as “The Dude.”

The Dude was what I called myself at a Halloween party in October of 1999. Since it was a costume party, I came in what I now recognize as The Dude’s attire. A pair of baggy blue jeans, a white shirt, over it a sleeveless tie-dyed shirt, a pair of dark round sunglasses and a large black wig of

curly hair. I never once realized on that day, that The Dude would make for some very good memories.

Before I go on, I should really explain The Dude to you. Without boring anyone, or going into a deep explanation, The Dude is just me. I mean “The Dude” is my character, like many wrestlers have characters or “gimmicks”, mine was The Dude. When I talk about The Dude, I talk about him as a different person, because he is. Actors and actresses do the same, they say their character does this, instead of they do this. They are separate people with separate beliefs, values, attitudes, and personalities. The Dude and I are no different. I am Stefan, a guy who wears blue jeans and Nike shirts. I’m sarcastic sometimes, laid back others, and hilarious (or as I like to believe) at times. The Dude is a fast-talking, cool, groovy guy in blue jeans and tie-dye. He rarely gets angry, thinks he’s God’s gift to women, and likes to dance for some strange reason (I dance like a stick-man). All around, The Dude is my attitudes and personality traits taken to extreme levels. He’s just an extension of me, but we are still different.

We even use different moves in the ring. I will need to explain his finisher, the “Roll of Doom” later, but his signature move, the Tie-Dye DDT, is much like my double arm. Instead of hooking the arms, The Dude wraps his right arm around the back of his opponent’s neck, then holds the opponents stomach with the other. Lifting with his left, The Dude plants his opponent directly on the top of his head, while falling backwards with him.

Whew, I think I’ve covered The Dude somewhat, though he really is a very deep character. Confused yet? Great, it’s just like watching a Mike Summerton match, minus the loss of IQ points.

So we decided that on April 26th, 2001, we would bring The Dude in for a few matches. I promised I would.

Finally, April 25th arrived. Daryl, Ryan, and Adam came over that day, though I don’t really remember an awful lot about what happened that day. I’ll blame on of the thing I’ve been hit with... I blame the ukulele, which I actually broke over the back of Adam’s head. The thing that stands out the best in my memory of that day is the stump.

Ryan, Daryl, and myself were walking up the hill to my house after going downtown to pick up some drinks and food, when Daryl and I saw it. The stump. We knew that we had to have the stump, so we had something to jump off of. The stump was maybe two feet tall, so really it was useless. But Daryl and I trekked right into the ditch and pulled the stump right out. We then proceeded to run to my house with the stump over our heads like some bizarre war trophy.

On a side note, I think I’ve been hit in the head with everything I’ve ever jumped off of. I guess I’ll have to refrain from jumping off a car anytime soon.

We placed the stump, our own trophy, in my backyard next to what we called our “ring.” Much like the one in March, all we did was throw down the four patio chair pads, with a blanket on top. But we needed more; we wanted a larger area to work in, so we searched for other padding. Many pillows were taken out of my house, but we still needed a larger area. I had an idea. Daryl and I got some black plastic garbage bags and then smuggled Mike to near death for stinking up our matches.

Actually, Mike wasn’t with us yet, so instead we packed to bags full of leaves. Unfortunately, we underestimated the lurking danger that is; sticks.

Yes, during that day sticks that had somehow found their way into the two garbage bags assaulted us. Taking a suplex was no longer a simply thing, there was no the fear of an upraised stick below you.

When wrestlers learn to “bump” (take a move example; to land on your back is a “back bump”, your face a “face bump”, etc.) they learn to land in a way that spreads the impact. They learn to land

flat, as to spread the impact over a wider area, lessening the pain and negative effects. It's like the bed of nails. When we took a suplex onto a padded area, we were all right. When we took a suplex onto a single stick, we weren't so all right. And that's just a suplex; now imagine a DDT, or any other face bump.

The moral of this little story: Stick + Eyes = Pain.

We had a lot of fun that day. Aside from the always present under current of pain, which found it's way into almost everything we did, we did have a very good time. There are a few things that stick out in my memory.

Kind of like how sticks poke... Never mind.

Stefan's Top Three Memories of April 26th and 27th: For convenience, I thought I'd give you a top three. Mostly because a top five is too long, and a top one... Well, that makes about as much sense as letting Mike win the championship. Wait, that's happened.

(Please, join me in a group shudder).

3. The crazy flapjack. Mmmmmmm... Flapjacks. Actually, the flapjack is a wrestling move (go figure) that we just happened to do a few times in April. But there was only one that really stands out from the rest. A flapjack is pulled off when an opponent is running at the attacker. In this case, it was a double flapjack, which means that there were two people delivering the move instead of one. They were Adam and Ryan, and I was the one receiving the move, though I was in "character" as The Dude. Basically, The Dude ran at Ryan and Adam, who were facing each other, but with a gap of about four feet between them. When The Dude made it to where the gap was, both Adam and Ryan would lift him by the stomach, launching him straight up and then down to the ground for a large but basic face bump. But, as I know well, if I'm involved in it, chances are it's not going to be basic. But it sure as hell was large.

I ran, and they launched me up, and I flew! It seemed like I was up in the air for hours, but it was mere seconds. Adam and Ryan had thrown me well over Adam's head (a legit six foot one). Then, it was time to come down. Don't worry, I didn't hit any sticks, in fact, there was never any danger of that. Instead, I missed all the padding and landed on my shoulder/neck.

Seeing that The Dude had just made the move look like a million dollars (American), Daryl started to run. Adam and Ryan were ready. Daryl jumped... Right into their arms, successfully making the move like one dollar (Canadian).

It was noticed by Adam that The Dude was not really moving all too much. On further inspection, Adam concluded that The Dude was hurt, and hurt bad. Adam quickly ran over to the camera, covering the camera's view with his hulking shoulders and goofy face. He then addressed the worried public in his best doctor's voice.

"It appears we have an injury. The Dude has been hurt off of that last move. Tests will be in soon, and we hope--"

It was at this point that The Dude, showing super-human strength and recovery, tackled Adam out of the picture. He then proceeded to pummel Adam with the killer pool noodle. Don't ask.

2. The happy birthday video. Ryan and Daryl are going to hate me forever bringing this up, but we made Adam a happy birthday video, on my birthday no less. Except, this was no ordinary birthday video. This video had... dare I say it? Nudity.

Whoa, whoa, whoa! Don't get all excited, it was only my, well, posterior. But it served its purpose. Through the magic of crayola blue markers, and a bathroom mirror, I was able to write "happy b-day"

on myself. Unfortunately, I pulled a very Summerton like move, by forgetting that mirrors reflect things backwards. So, instead of “happy b-day” written in barely legible blue letters on my behind, I had “yad-b yppah” written in barely legible blue letters on my behind.

We still made the movie though, which involved the backwards blue letters, with Daryl and Ryan singing “happy birthday to you” in voices reserved only for the Bee Gees and the after math of a punch to the stomach slipped south.

The next day was a classic.

Ryan and Adam teamed up in a tag match to take on the team of Daryl and myself. After a few moves, I tagged in Daryl and Ryan tagged in Adam. Adam slaughtered Daryl, hitting him with botched move after botched move. Then, it happened.

Adam went for a tag, and was hit with the most hideous, gross, disgusting view known to man! Ryan mooned Adam, who was no more than two feet away from “tagging” Ryan in. Adam screamed, and turned to me for help. But of course, I had followed suit, mooning Adam.

“Happy birthday?!”

He read it! Backwards! In under a second!

It’s wrong on too many levels.

1. The “pediwee.” The move, the myth, the legend. The pediwee is a variation of a move called the Pedigree. When the opponent is leaning over, the attacker stands in front of his opponent and hooks both of the opponent’s arms behind their back. To finish the move, the attacked then falls to their knees, planting the opponent’s face into the ground with their body weights. It is an incredible move. The pediwee is not.

The set up is identical. With the opponents arms hooked, the attacker makes his move. In one stump pulling motion, the attacker grabs the opponents boxers, and pulls. Hard. And so the pediwee is completed when the opponent (or victim) collapses to the ground in a heap of high-pitched squeaks and curses.

Sure, it seems funny now. But fifteen years from now when Mrs. Laird, Moore, Good, or Phillips wonders why she can’t have a child with her husband, well...

Blame the pediwee.

What a weekend the April 26th and 27th was. After all the matches and mayhem, we all retired to a few martinis and caviar, while sampling the local area and picking up chicks like no one else can.

O.K. You caught me, I’m lying. We never drank martinis, it was Royal Crown pop. The rest is true totally true though. I swear.

So, this ends my story of the first event of my backyard career. It sure has been a long, unbelievable ride. There are too many stories to put down on paper, which is sad, because many of them should be told. On one hand, I want to relive my memories, but I worry that they may become stale. On the other hand, there’s always a stick looming around here, and we all now know what happens when wrestlers are around sticks.

Or 2X4s for that matter, then there’s cooking grills, chairs, stumps, ukuleles...

- Stefan Phillips (November 2002)