

## Tom Zenk in Japan



### (1) First tour, Nov-Dec 1986 AJPW Real World Tag League

Tom Zenk's first tour of Japan was with Rick Martel in late 1986. In effect, the tour was a trial run for the Can-Am Connection. Can-Am had been trialed in several matches in mainland America prior to the tour - including a 'no-contest' match against then reigning WWF Tag Team Champions, The British Bulldogs (Dynamite Kid and Davey Boy Smith) on November 14, 1986 in Montreal.

Shortly after the Montreal match, Zenk and Martel travelled to Tokyo for the prestigious AJPW Real World Tag League '86. Stan Hansen, Ted DiBiase, Dory Funk Jr., Terry Funk, Terry Gordy were other US wrestlers invited to the 1986 league.

Zenk and Martel used the tour to test out some of their soon-to-be signature Can-Am moves - in particular, the 'catapult splash'. This move highlighted Martel in an aerial dive over the top rope. Zenk found himself taking most of the bumps while Martel held the ropes, before finally taking the hot tag and launching the 'catapult splash' to win the match.

Zenk and Martel's AJPW debut was on November 22, 1986 against Terry Funk and Dory Funk Jr. The team was an instant hit with Japanese fans, impressing AJPW promoter Shohei 'Giant' Baba and chief booker Lord James Bleares who offered Zenk and Martel the tag belts and a 5 year contract at \$5,000 a week each to stay with AJPW. At Martel's urging, Zenk turned down the offer to fulfil their commitments to WWF.

At this time Zenk was earning \$2,500 a week with WWF. Martel guaranteed they'd be earning \$5,000 a week each in WWF within 6 months. Zenk resolved that if Martel's promise wasn't realized within that time, he would reconsider AJPW's offer. The scene was set for the eventual Can-Am split.

Date	Match details	
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November 22, 1986	<b>All Japan - Tokyo</b>  Terry Funk and Dory Funk Jnr over Tom Zenk and Rick Martel. Zenk tried for a pin with a sunset flip but Terry reversed it and got the 3 count at 13:31	<b>(TV match)</b>
November 23, 1986	<b>All Japan - Tokyo</b>  Stan Hanson and Ted DiBiase battled Tom Zenk and Rick Martel to a no contest at 9:51	
November 24, 1986	<b>All Japan - Matsumoto</b>  Tom Zenk and Rick Martel won with a catapult splash on Shinichi Nakano and Kuniaki Kobayashi 7:37	
November 25, 1986	<b>All Japan - Sanjoh</b>  Tom Zenk and Rick Martel over Masa Fuchi and Haru Sonodax	
November 26, 1986	<b>All Japan - Akita</b>  Jumbo Tsuruta and Genichiro Tenryu over Tom Zenk and Rick Martel when Tenryu pinned Zenk with an inside cradle 12:55	
November 27, 1986	<b>All Japan - Hakodate</b> Tom Zenk and Rick Martel over Rusher Kimura and Goro Tsurumi	
November 28, 1986	<b>All Japan - Sapporo</b>  Tom Zenk and Rick Martel won with a catapult splash over Masanobu Fuchi and Takashi Ishikawa 10:55	
November 29, 1986	<b>All Japan - Misawa</b>  Stan Hanson and Ted DiBiase over Tom Zenk and Rick Martel with a powerslam 10:29	

December 1, 1986	<p><b>All Japan - Kasugai</b></p> <p>Tom Zenk and Rick Martel over Tiger Mask (Mitsuharu Misawa) and Mighty Inoue</p>	
December 2, 1986	<p><b>All Japan - Fukui</b></p> <p>Tom Zenk and Rick Martel with a catapult splash on Motoshi Okuma and Samson Fuyuki 10:54</p>	
December 3, 1986	<p><b>All Japan - Kobe</b></p> <p>Tom Zenk and Hiro Saito with a powerslam over Norio Honaga and Kuniaki Kobayashi 7:29</p> <p>Note: Martel wrestled a singles match, losing to Riki Choshu in 11:21 ("After all it was Choshu's birthday.")</p>	
December 4, 1986	<p><b>All Japan - Fukuoka</b></p> <p>Tom Zenk and Rick Martel with a catapult splash on Masanobu Fuchi and Toshiaki Kawada 10:52</p>	
December 5, 1986	<p><b>All Japan - Kumamoto</b></p> <p>Tom Zenk and Rick Martel over Terry Gordy and Killer Khan by DQ</p>	
December 6, 1986	<p><b>All Japan - Takamatsu</b></p> <p>Tom Zenk and Rick Martel, with a catapult splash on Samson Fuyuki and Tiger Mask (Mitsuharu Misawa) in 7:55</p>	
December 8, 1986	<p><b>All Japan - Hiroshima</b></p> <p>Riki Choshu and Yoshiaki Yatsu battled Rick Martel and Tom Zenk to a double</p>	

	countout at 13:41	
December 9, 1986	<p><b>All Japan - Hamamatsu</b></p> <p>Tom Zenk over Shinichi Nakano with a power slam 7:56.</p> <p>Rick Martel with a catapult splash on Animal Hamaguchi 7:51</p>	
December 11, 1986	<p><b>All Japan - Mito</b></p> <p>Tom Zenk and Rick Martel battled Giant Baba and Tiger Mask (Mitsuharu Misawa) to a double count out at 11:12</p>	
December 12, 1986	<p><b>All Japan - Tokyo</b></p> <p>Giant Baba and Hiroshi Wajima over Tom Zenk and Rick Martel when Zenk was clotheslined in 9:55 (images above)</p>	<b>(TV match)</b>

## Tom Zenk in Japan



### (2) Second tour, '87 Real World's Strongest Tag Team League 11-21-12-11

By mid 1987, it was clear to Zenk that the money promised by Martel wasn't coming. Worse, he had discovered that Martel had negotiated their WWF contract to favor himself financially. Zenk responded by resigning from the WWF.

Zenk now found himself effectively cut out from wrestling in the US until all outstanding contractual issues with WWF had been resolved. Accordingly, he returned to All Japan for the lucrative **1987 Real World Tag Team League Tournament**. The tournament, held over the period 11/21 to 12/ 11, 1987, included (as well as Tom Zenk) the following US wrestlers - Stan Hansen, Terry Gordy, Bruiser Brody, Colonel Debeers; Jimmy Snuka, Abdullah the Butcher, T.N.T, Dory Funk Jr, Terry Funk, Mark Youngblood and Chris Youngblood and Marc Laurinitias (a.k.a 'Terminator').

There were a total of 12 tag teams. Each team competed against the 11 others, resulting in 66 matches held in 16 locations over 18 days.

In the tournament final, (December 11, 1987 in Tokyo), Jumbo Tsuruta and Yoshiaki Yatsu defeated Bruiser Brody and Jimmy Snuka. Tom Zenk and his assigned partner 'The Terminator' ended the tournament in 11th place (see table below). In his 1988 interview, Zenk noted some of the problems he experienced partnering 'The Terminator.'

*"Well I was teamed up with The Terminator. Our styles didn't really click, though, since he works like Demolition and I like fast, high flying moves. He was also a bit green but, I guess the promoter figured that I'm relatively new in the business so it would work. I had a great time, though. It's always nice working for a full house and every night the arenas were packed" (Wrestling Fury, June 1988).*

This comparison between 'The Terminator' and 'Demolition' was an accurate one. 'Demolition' was a WWF copy of 'The Road Warriors', while The Terminator was Marc Laurinitas, brother of Road Warrior 'Animal' (Joe Laurinitas).

Zenk, The Terminator and the Youngbloods were massively outweighed by men of the seniority of Giant Baba, Bruiser Brody, Stan Hansen and Dory and Terry Funk. Generally it was Terminator booked to do the job.

Date <i>* tag league round</i>	Place	Card and Result	
*Saturday 11/21/87	Korakuen Hall, Tokyo	Second match out of 4 - Genichiro Tenryu and Ashura Hara beat Tom Zenk and Terminator when Tenryu pinned Terminator at 8:39 with powerbomb.	<b>(TV match)</b>
Sunday 11/22/87	Korakuen Hall, Tokyo (TV match)	Tom Zenk and Terminator beat Toshiaki Kawada and Samson Fuyuki when Zenk pinned Kawada at 10:10 with airplane spin powerslam.	<b>(TV match)</b>
Tuesday 11/24/87	Hachinohe	Tom Zenk and Terminator beat Kawada and Fuyuki when Terminator pinned Fuyuki at 9:29 with powerslam.	
*Wednesday 11/25/87	Hakodate	Bruiser Brody and Jimmy Snuka beat Tom Zenk and Terminator when Snuka supersplashed Terminator	
Thursday 11/26/87	Sapporo (TV match)	Tom Zenk and Terminator beat Isao Takagi and Haruku Eigen when Zenk pinned Eigen at 8:26 with inside cradle.	<b>(TV match)</b>
Friday 11/27/87	Muroran	Jumbo Tsuruta and Yoshiaki Yatsu beat Tom Zenk and Terminator when Yatsu pinned Terminator at 11:03 with powerslam.	
*Saturday	Iwamizawa	Tom Zenk and Terminator vs	

11/28/87		Tsuruta and Yatsu	
*Monday 11/30/87	Niigata	Giant Baba and Hiroshi Wajima beat Tom Zenk and Terminator when Wajima pinned Terminator at 8:24 after a lariat	
*Tuesday 12/01/87	Kanazawa	Tom Zenk and Terminator vs Dory Funk Jr and Terry Funk	
Wednesday 12/02/87	Osaka (TV Match)	Tsuruta and Yatsu beat Tom Zenk and Terminator when Tsuruta pinned Terminator at 8:44 after backdrop.	<b>(TV match)</b>
*Thursday 12/03/87	Kashiwara	Tom Zenk and Terminator vs Kimura and Tsurumi	
*Friday 12/04/87	Fukuoka (TV Match)	Tiger Mask (Misawa) and Shinichi Nakano beat Tom Zenk and Terminator when Tiger pinned Terminator at 10:29 with a German suplex.	<b>(TV match)</b>
Saturday 12/05/87	Nagasaki	Great Kabuki and John Tenta beat Tom Zenk and Terminator when Tenta pinned Terminator at 11:09 with a splash.	
*Sunday 12/06/87	Beppu	Zenk and Terminator beat Youngbloods when Tom Zenk pinned Mark at 12:18 after Terminator hits a lariat.	
*Tuesday 12/08/87	Maebashi	Stan Hansen and Terry Gordy beat Tom Zenk and Terminator when Gordy pinned Terminator at 8:58 with a powerbomb.	
*Thursday 12/10/87	Aizuwakamatsu (TV match)	Abdullah the Butcher and TNT beat Tom Zenk and Terminator when Butcher pinned Terminator at 6:20 after a elbow drop.	<b>(TV match)</b>

*Friday 12/11/87	Nihon - Budokan Hall, Tokyo (TV Match)	Kabuki and John Tenta beat Tom Zenk and Terminator when Tenta pinned Terminator at 9:30 after an elbow drop.	<b>(TV match)</b>



## Tom Zenk in Japan



### (3) Third tour - 1988 Summer Action Series II , August 20 - September 9, 1988

Tom Zenk came back to Japan for a new series of AJPW commencing 20 August, 1988.

The *Wrestling Observer* reported "Zenk ...is far larger and more muscular than when he was on tour here during the tag tournament... Ace and Zenk are being groomed for the tag tourney this year. Zenk's dropkicks are still among the best" (WON 9/5/88).

The series began with a TV opener which saw Tom Zenk and Johnny Ace defeat Yoshiaki Yatsu and Takashi Ishikawa in an upset finish. The Sky-High drop kick which Zenk had perfected in the Pacific North West was used to effect. Johnny Ace's signature move - "The Ace Crusher" - also got an early outing, (later appropriated as the 'Diamond Cutter') - "The finish saw Ishikawa get behind Ace for the German Suplex but Ace grabbed him like a snap-mare but instead fell straight down - like a neckbreaker forward and got the pin."

"Kendall Windham first showed me the move, and it was a variation of the 'neckbraker'. I used it in my first match in Japan after Tom Zenk suggested I establish a finish for the Japanese fans ....The Japanese crowd went crazy because they'd never seen the move before." - Johnny Ace

The tour included, on **August 29, 1988 in Tokyo**, Tom Zenk and Jerry Oates against Hiroshi Wajima and Takashi Ishikawa in the Bruiser Brody Memorial Show with the veteran Japanese team taking out the match.

"The Memorial was was great and eerie at the same time. I mean, it was weird with an arena packed paying homage to a wrestler's casket. The crowd was so into it you could feel Brody's spirit. It truly touched me. It was also beautiful to see all the fans bring him roses and gifts. And a lot of money was raised for his family. Brody was a true hero and the Japanese loved him. It's a shame all the American promoters would say is he was trouble. Yeah, trouble cause he wanted to get paid?" Tom Zenk, Torch Interview part 2

**August 30, in Osaka before 4,000 fans** - Tom Zenk and Stan Hansen battled to a double count out against Abdullah the Butcher and Jimmy Snuka

**September 4, before 2,450 fans in Kanazu** - Oates, Ace and Zenk paid their respect to Giant Baba in a tag match with Baba partnering Yatsu and Sato.

**September 9, Chiba** - for the series end, in Tom Zenk teamed with Jimmy Snuka to beat Isao Takagi and Akira Taue at 11:19 when Snuka pinned Taue with his 'Superfly Splash.'

A quick review of the match results (below) indicate that Zenk and Ace were receiving a good size push from Baba, including equal billing with Hansen and Snuka. All matches ended with a win for Zenk and his partner or a double count-out. The only exceptions were when Zenk was matched against either AJPW promoter Giant Baba or veteran Wajima.

"I teamed some with Snuka ....and was very impressed. He's a phenomenal athlete. ... he could have been bigger than the Hulk but was held down. But he's a decent guy and a proud father" (Tom Zenk).

Date	Place	Card and Result	
Saturday 08/20/88	Korakuen Hall, Tokyo (TV Match)	Tom Zenk and Johnny Ace defeat Yatsu and Takashi Ishikawa when Ace pinned Ishikawa at 7:49 after a Ace Crusher	<b>(TV match)</b>
Sunday 08/21/88	Kitamoto, Saitama	Tom Zenk and Johnny Ace beat Kabuki and Akio Sato when Ace pinned Sato at 9:00 after a Ace Crusher	
Monday 08/22/88	Tatomi, Yamanashi	Tom Zenk and Johnny Ace double count out draw with Kabuki and Akio Sato at 12:10	
Thursday 08/25/88	Yoshikawa, Saitama (TV Match)	Tom Zenk and The V beat Kabuki and Masa Fuchi when Zenk pinned Fuchi at 10:25 after a flying cross body block.	<b>(TV match)</b>

Saturday 08/27/88	Hiratuka, Kanagawa	Tom Zenk and Johnny Ace double count out draw with Kabuki and Ishikawa at 8:11	
Monday 08/29/88	Budokan Hall, Tokyo (TV Match)	<u>Bruiser Brody Memorial Night*</u> - Wajima and Ishikawa beat Tom Zenk and Jerry Oates at 8:11 when Wajima pinned Oates after a lariat.	<b>(TV match)</b>
Tuesday 08/30/88	Osaka (TV match)	Stan Hansen and Tom Zenk no contest Butcher and Jimmy Snuka at 7:54	<b>(TV match)</b>
Thursday 09/01/88	Kurayoshi, Tottori	Tom Zenk and Johnny Ace double count out with Tiger and Nakano at 9:35	
Sunday 09/04/88	Kanazu, Fukui	Baba and Yatsu and Sato beat Tom Zenk and Johnny Ace and Jerry Oates at 11:34 when Yatsu forced Oates to submit with the prison deathlock	
Monday 09/05/88	Asahi, Toyama	Tom Zenk and Johnny Ace double count out with Shuji Takano and Nakano at 11:32	
Wednesday 09/07/88	Tsubame, Niigata	Tom Zenk and Johnny Ace double count out with Ishikawa and Fuchi at 22:34	
Friday 09/09/88	Chiba (TV match)	Tom Zenk and Jimmy Snuka beat Isao Takagi	<b>(TV match)</b>

		and Akira Taue at 11:19 when Snuka pins Taue with a superfly splash.	
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Bruiser Brody Memorial Show  
**August 29, 1988 in Tokyo, Japan**  
**Budokan Hall drawing 14,200 (\$700,000)**

1	Prelim match
2	Prelim match
3	Toshiaki Kawada and Yoshinari Ogawa beat Masa Fuchi and Kenta Kobashi
4	Akira Taue and Shinichi Nakano beat The V and Rocky Laukea
5	The Great Kabuki pinned Goro Tsurumi
6	<b>Hiroshi Wajima and Takashi Ishikawa beat Jerry Oates and Tom Zenk</b>
7	Jimmy Snuka and Johnny Ace beat Tiger Mask (Misawa) and ???
8	Giant Baba pinned Rusher Kimura
9	PWF and United National Champ Stan Hansen beat Abdullah the Butcher (10:39) via DQ
10	Genichiro Tenryu and Ashura Hara beat Jumbo Tsuruta and Yoshiaki Yatsu (27:51) to win the World Tag Title

## Tom Zenk in Japan



### **(4) Fourth tour - Spring Champion Carnival 3/89 - 4/89**

Tom Zenk made two tours of Japan in 1989 - in the Spring (March/April) and a few months later for the 1989 Summer Action series (see below).

US wrestlers on the Spring 1989 tour included - in addition to Tom Zenk - Dan Kroffat (Phil LaFon), Doug Furnas and Dustin Rhodes (billing himself as 'Dusty Rhodes Jr.,') Stan Hansen, Terry Gordy, Pete Roberts and Joel Deaton.

In this opening match of the tournament, 3/25/89 in Kumagaya, Genichiro Tenryu, Toshiaki Kawada and Samson Fuyuki defeated Tom Zenk, Dan Kroffat (Phil LaFon) and Doug Furnas in 14:00 when Tenryu pinned Kroffat with the powerbomb.

A highlight of the Spring '89 tour was an All Japan All-Asian Tag Team Championship title match (*images below*). Zenk and Kroffat were narrowly defeated by champions Toshiaki Kawada and Samson Fuyuki (Kawada pinned Kroffat with a rolling crucifix cradle in 13:17) - *by all accounts 'a match to see on video'*.

Tom Zenk's score from the Spring series was 7 wins, 2 draws and 7 losses, wrestling solo and tag against talent such as Toshiaki Kawada, Samson Fuyuki, The Great Kabuki, and Masa Fuchi. The series ended with a match which saw AJPW promoter Shohei "Giant" Baba, Baba, Rusher Kimura and John Tenta wrestle Tom Zenk, Dan Kroffat and Joel Deaton.

Date	Place	Card and Result	
03/25/89	Kumagaya, Saitama	Genichiro Tenryu,	(TV

	(TV show)	Toshiaki Kawada and Samson Fuyuki over Tom Zenk, Dan Kroffat (Phil LaFon) and Doug Furnas in 14:00 when Tenryu pinned Kroffat with the powerbomb	<b>match)</b>
03/27/89	Korakuen Hall, Tokyo	Tom Zenk and 'Dusty Rhodes, Jr.,' (Dustin Rhodes) battled John Tenta and The Great Kabuki to a double countout in 8:33  Battle royal	
03/28/89	Iwatsuki, Saitama	Tom Zenk over Mighty Inoue	
03/29/89	Korakuen Hall, Tokyo (TV show)	Tom Zenk, Dan Kroffat and Doug Furnas over Shinichi Nakano, Akira Taue and Isao Takagi.	<b>(TV match)</b>
03/31/89	Sanjo, Niigata	Tom Zenk and 'DustyRhodes, Jr.,' battled John Tenta and Shunji Takano to a double countout in 17:09	
04/02/89	Hakui, Ishikawa Attendance 2,850	Tom Zenk and Doug Furnas over Shinichi Nakano and Kenta Kobashi in 11:46 when Furnas pinned Kobashi with a Samoan Backdrop	
04/04/89	Bunka Gym, Yokohama, Kanagawa (TV show) Attendance 4,250	The Great Kabuki and Masa Fuchi over Tom Zenk and Pete Roberts in 11:29 when Kabuki pinned Roberts after a vertical bodyblock off the top rope	<b>(TV match)</b>

04/07/89	Kumamoto, Kumamoto Attendance 2,750	Tom Zenk and 'Dusty Rhodes, Jr.,' over Shunji Takano and Isamu Teranishi in 10:18 when Zenk pinned Teranishi with a splash offthe top rope.	
04/08/89	Ebino, Miyazaki		
04/09/89	Nichinan, Miyazaki	Yoshiaki Yatsu over Tom Zenk in 10:42 when Zenk submitted to the Prison Deathlock	
04/10/89	Beppu, Oita	The Great Kabuki and John Tenta over Tom Zenk and Doug Furnas in 11:40 when Kabuki pinned Furnas with an inside cradle	
04/12/89	Marugame, Kagawa (TV show)	Yoshiaki Yatsu and John Tenta over Tom Zenk and 'Dusty Rhodes, Jr.,' in 13:35 when Yatsu made Zenk submit to the Prison Deathlock	<b>(TV match)</b>
04/16/89	Korakuen Hall, Tokyo (TV show) Attendance 2,400	Tom Zenk over Isao Takagi in 6:54 with a flying bodyblock	<b>(TV match)</b>
04/17/89	Karasuyama, Tochigi Attendance 1,450	Tom Zenk and 'Dusty Rhodes, Jr.,' over Isao Takagi and John Tenta	
04/18/89	All Japan All-Asian Tag Team Title Ota-Ward Gymnasium, Ota-Ku Tokyo (TV show)	Footloose: ToshiakiKawada and Samson Fuyuki over Tom Zenk and Dan Kroffat to retain the AllJapan All-Asian Tag Team Title in 13:17	<b>(TV match)</b>

	Attendance 4,200	when Kawada pinned Kroffat with a rolling crucifix cradle.	
04/19/89	Okazaki, Aichi Attendance 1,850	Tom Zenk and Doug Furnas over John Tenta and Kenta Kobashi	
04/20/89	Osaka, Osaka (TV show) Attendance 4,300	Shohei "Giant" Baba, Rusher Kimura and John Tenta over Tom Zenk, Dan Kroffat and Joel Deaton in 10:59 when Baba pinned Deaton after a boot to the face.	<b>(TV match)</b>



# Tom Zenk in Japan



## (5) Fifth tour - All Japan Summer Action Series Results 1989

The AJPW Summer Action Series, 1989 featured Tom Zenk and the following US wrestlers - Stan Hansen, The Fantastics (Tommy Rogers and Bobby Fulton), Joe and Dean Malenko, Jim Brunzell, Marc Laurinitas (aka 'The Terminator') and Dick Beyer (aka "The Destroyer").

The tour opened on 7/1 in Omiya before 4,100 fans.

Nippon Television (owners of All Japan Pro Wrestling) had declared July 'Bruiser Brody Month' and was airing 90 minutes of Brody's best matches every Monday night for the month. A Bruiser Brody Memorial Night, including a ritual ceremony, was held on 7/16/89 with a card including Zenk and Brunzell in a match against The Fantastics (Tommy Rogers and Bobby Fulton)

Stan Hansen was booked to help fill the spot left by Brody. (At the 1988 Memorial Show, Brody's wife Barbara Goodish had presented Brody's chain to Hansen to indicate Hansen's succession to Brody's spot). The Fantastics were making their Japan debut. The Malenko brothers (Joe and Dean) had a "brother versus brother" angle - with Joe winning the PWF World Junior title to set up a match against Dean in Sapporo. Tom Zenk had been teamed with Jim Brunzell while Zenk's 1987 partner, Marc Laurinidas (aka 'The Terminator') was tagged with the remaining US wrestler "Destroyer" Dick Beyer.

In contrast to the Spring tour, Zenk was booked to win only one singles match (over Yoshinari Ogawa) and one tag match (with Brunzell over The Great Kabuki and Mighty Inoue) using a slingshot splash for both finishes. There were a number of reasons for this booking.

(1) That season, after years of double count-outs, Baba had decided on a pinfall or submission to finish every match. He believed clean finishes were a major factor in the rival UWF's success.

(2) At the time, there was considerable heat between AJPW and NWA - despite various efforts to sew up a deal between the promotions to share talent. AJPW were pressing Zenk to sign a contract for the upcoming October tour. Zenk requested a long term contract and commitment from AJPW which they appeared reluctant to guarantee. Meanwhile NWA had contacted Zenk and were willing to

sign a two year contract at \$156,000 per year. Zenk advised AJPW of his NWA negotiations and the possibility of being unavailable in October, unless AJPW matched the deal.

(3) In deference to Zenk's Japanese fans - and in case Zenk might still be persuaded to sign - he was protected in the booking and Brunzell booked to do the jobs.

Following the 1989 Summer Tour, Zenk signed a 2 year contract with NWA/WCW. He didn't return to Japan until March 1991, for the opposition NJPW/WCW Tokyo Dome Supershow (see below).

<b>Date</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Card and Result</b>	
07/01/89	Omiya (TV taping) (attendance 4,100)	Yoshiaki Yatsu and The Great Kabuki over Tom Zenk and Jim Brunzell in 12:08 when Yatsu made Brunzell submit to the Prison Deathlock (similar to the old Indian Deathlock).	<b>(TV match)</b>
07/03/89	Takasaki (TV taping)	Tom Zenk over Yoshinari Ogawa in 6:43 with a slingshot splash.	<b>(TV match)</b>
07/07/89	Obihiro (attendance 2,100)	Joe and Dean Malenko over Tom Zenk and Jim Brunzell in 14:10 when Joe rolled up Brunzell.	
07/08/89	Kitami (attendance 2,350)	Yoshiaki Yatsu and Akira Taue over Tom Zenk and Jim Brunzell in 11:10 when Yatsu made Brunzell submit to the Prison Deathlock.	
07/11/89	Sapporo (TV Taping)	Fantastics (Tommy Rogers and Bobby Fulton) over Tom Zenk and Jim Brunzell in 12:58 when Rogers pinned Brunzell with a somersault splash.	<b>(TV match)</b>
07/13/89	Yagumo	Yoshiaki Yatsu and Shunji Takano over Tom Zenk and Jim Brunzell	

07/15/89	Korakuen Hall, Tokyo	Tom Zenk and Jim Brunzell over The Great Kabuki and Mighty Inoue in 11:21 when Zenk pinned Inoue after a slingshot splash.	
07/16/89	Bruiser Brody Memorial Night, Korakuen Hall, Tokyo (TV Taping)	Fantastics over Tom Zenk and Jim Brunzell in 13:17 when Rogers pinned Brunzell after a somersault splash.	<b>(TV match)</b>
07/18/89	Otsu (TV taping)	Jumbo Tsuruta and Kenta Kobashi over Tom Zenk and Jim Brunzell in 16:47 when Tsuruta pinned Brunzell with his backdrop suplex. A belly-to-belly suplex with a twist.	<b>(TV match) In Collection 2 copies</b>
07/19/89	Wakayama	Fantastics over Tom Zenk and Jim Brunzell	
07/21/89	Kyoto	Yoshiaki Yatsu and Shunji Takano over Tom Zenk and Jim Brunzell	
07/22/89	Kanazawa (TV taping)	Footloose: Toshiaki Kawada and Samson Fuyuki over Tom Zenk and Jim Brunzell in 10:50 when Kawada pinned Brunzell after a missile dropkick off the top rope.	<b>(TV match)</b>
07/23/89	Mikuni-cho	John Tenta over Tom Zenk in 8:03 with an elbow drop.	
07/24/89	Hamakita	Yoshiaki Yatsu and Shunji Takano over Tom Zenk and Jim Brunzell in 10:00 when Yatsu made Brunzell submit to the Prison Deathlock.	
07/28/89	Kiryu (TV Taping)	Shunji Takano and Kenta Kobashi over Tom Zenk and Jim Brunzell in 14:31 when Kobashi	<b>(TV match)</b>

		pinned Brunzell with a Blockbuster Suplex	
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## Tom Zenk in Japan



### **(6) Sixth Tour New Japan/WCW Starrcade '91 March 21, 1991 in Egg Dome, Tokyo, Japan drawing 64,500 (\$3,160,000)**

#### **Tom Zenk, Brian Pillman and Tim Horner vs Shiro Koshinaka, Kuniaki Kobayashi and Takayuki Iizuka.**

Tom Zenk's 5th Japan tour had been the AJPW Summer Action Series in 1989.

Zenk had been asked back for the October '89 series - but in the meantime had been contacted by NWA. Given the heat that existed between NWA and All Japan, and given that signing with NWA meant burning a bridge with Baba, Zenk held out for a two year contract from NWA and an exemption from working NWA matches with Baba's rival, New Japan.

This exemption was respected until 1991, when Zenk was booked by Dusty Rhodes for the New Japan/WCW Supershow at the Tokyo Egg Dome - Match 2 out of 11 - Tom Zenk, Brian Pillman and Tim Horner vs Shiro Koshinaka, Kuniaki Kobayashi and Takayuki Iizuka.

For the first few weeks of Rhodes' tenure as booker, Pillman had been working Mike Graham to set up a light heavyweight division where he could dominate. In late February, Graham and Rhodes decided to give Pillman a super-push as the "new Magnum T.A.", with Graham coaching Pillman into the role. Pillman came to the New Japan/WCW Supershow hoping to convince Rhodes to set him up with a program against Jushin Liger that would help solidify his place as a main eventer and increase his money.

## Tom Zenk in Japan



### (7) Seventh Tour - 1992 New Japan Pro Wrestling Super Grade Tag League II

By the Fall of 1992 the WCW locker room was in open conflict with Bill Watts over cuts to pay and working conditions. The Steiners were rumored to be leaving for WWF or New Japan. WCW storylines were in disarray and the card for the upcoming Halloween Havoc bore no relation to the storylines being pursued on weekly TV. Dustin Rhodes was in the second year of an undeserved mega-push to the World Championship by his father, WCW booker Dusty Rhodes. Rhodes would soon be joined by Bill Watts' son Erik in pushes that were motivated by nepotism rather than talent - pushes that had sidelined Tom Zenk, Brian Pillman and other WCW talent since early 1991.

In October 1992, WCW booked Zenk to a short tour of Japan partnering Jim Neidhart and Chris Benoit in the New Japan Super Grade Tag League II.

Prior to the 1991 Supercard, Zenk's Japan work had been exclusively for Shohei Baba's All Japan Pro-Wrestling. In undertaking a second WCW tour with Inoki's rival New Japan Pro-Wrestling, Zenk was troubled both by old loyalties to Baba and the possible loss of future work with AJPW. These concerns were only partially moderated by New Japan's decision to bill him as "Z-Man" (Zenk being better known to AJPW fans by his own name).

In the Tournament itself, Vader and Tatsumi Fujinami had been scheduled to defend their 1991 championship but Vader pulled out after a knee operation. In his place Fujinami was partnered by Manobu Nakanishi. Nakanishi, at 220 pounds, had represented Japan in freestyle wrestling at the Barcelona Olympics and was being trained as a superstar for the late 1990s.

Jushin Liger had also been scheduled to participate but withdrew following a family emergency. Dean Malenko had recently defected from AJPW and was debuting for New Japan in the tournament. Neither Neidhart, Zenk, Benoit nor Malenko were looking forward to putting the rookie Nakanishi over.

Zenk and Neidhart were booked to finish last in the series. They made the most of it, having a good time playing heels and putting Bam Bam Bigelow over as a face (see below). In all cases its was Zenk or Benoit, not Neidhart who did the job, submitting to 'devastating finishes' including Bigelow's and Super Machine's diving head butts, Masa Chono' s Step-over Toe-hold Face-lock (STF), Hiroshi Hase's Northern Lights Suplex, Nakanishi's belly-to-belly suplex and Hashimoto's Leg Lariat.

On the bus to one of the venues, Benoit was overheard telling Zenk "someone at WCW mustn't like you" to have booked him to this series and to these matches.

It was Zenk's second and last tour with New Japan. In 1994 he returned to Japan, this time with Baba and AJPW.

Date	Match details	
10/08/92 Yokosuka City Gymnasium 2,500	Scott Norton and Super Strong Machine over Tom Zenk and Jim Neidhart when Machine pinned Zenk after a diving headbutt (11.13).	
10/09/92 Matsumoto City Gymnasium 3,630 sell out	Hiroshi Hase and Kensuke Sasaki over Tom Zenk (billed as Z-Man) and Jim Neidhart in 14:14 when Hase pinned Zenk with a Northern Lights Suplex.	
10/10/92 Komagane City Gymnasium	Riki Choshu and Shinya Hashimoto over Tom Zenk and Jim Neidhart in 8:09 when Hashimoto pinned Zenk after a Leg Lariat.	
10/11/92 Ago Arena 3.00 pm matinee	Tatsumi Fujinami, Keiji Muto and Masa Saito over Tony Halme, Tom Zenk and Jim Neidhart	
10/12/92	OFF	
10/13/92 Higashi Osaka Gymnasium	Riki Choshu, Masa Saito and Takayuki Iizuka over Tom Zenk, Jim Neidhart and Pegasus Kid (Chris Benoit) in 9:44 when Choshu pinned Kid with a Riki-Lariat.	
10/14/92 Ishikawa-Ken Sangyou Tenjikan Kanazawa	Masahiro Chono and Tony Halme (Ludvig Borga of the WWF) over Tom Zenk and Jim Neidhart in 8:53 when Chono made Zenk submit to the STF.	

10/15/92 Himeji City Kousei Gymnasium	Tatsumi Fujinami and Manabu Nakanishi over Tom Zenk and Jim Neidhart in 6:45 when Nakanishi pinned Zenk with a belly-to-belly suplex.	
10/16/92 Yokkaichi City Gymnasium	Tatsumi Fujinami, Osamu Kido and Manabu Nakanishi over Jim Neidhart, Tom Zenk and Masanobu Kurisu in 10:46 when Fujinami made Kurisu submit to the Dragon Sleeper.	
10/17/92 Kasugai City Gymnasium	Bam Bam Bigelow and Keiji Muto over Tom Zenk and Jim Neidhart in 11:50 when Bigelow pinned Zenk.	
10/18/92 Chiba Makuhari Messe Event Hall 3.00 pm matinee	Bam Bam Bigelow and Super Strong Machine over Tom Zenk and Jim Neidhart in 11:00 when Bigelow pinned Zenk after a diving headbutt.	
10/19 – 10/20/92	OFF	
10/21/92 Hamamatsu Arena	Super Strong Machine, Tatsutoshi Goto and Hiro Saito over Tom Zenk, Tony Halme and Pegasus Kid (Chris Benoit) in 11:32 when Machine pinned Zenk with a diving headbutt.	



## Tom Zenk in Japan



### **(8) Eighth Tour - 1994 All Japan Pro Wrestling Summer Action Series**

At the end of June, 1994 after finishing his fifth and final year with WCW, Tom Zenk headed back to Tokyo for the AJPW 1994 Summer Action Series. Zenk hadn't worked for AJPW since mid 1989 when he'd pulled out of a scheduled October tour to sign with WCW. That decision meant burning bridges with Baba and his intermediary, referee Joe Higuchi. Relationships with AJPW were further strained when Zenk's WCW contract required him to work for rival New Japan during tours in 1991 and 1992.

Despite this, as WON reported at the start of the 1994 tour (7/11/94) "Tom Zenk seemed to be receiving a medium level push on his return to this group after a four year absence."

Baba, however, was a traditionalist which meant current rankings tended to stand for some time. For the Summer Series, Baba asked him to take jobs "this time around" with a promise he'd be "built up again" over the next few tours.

According to Chris Benoit, "Wrestlers who are used to the big US promotions often view doing jobs as the first step toward getting buried and eventual loss of income... [In Japan] Guys come to me saying "I guess they don't like my work because I'm doing jobs every night since I got here." I tell them to just have good matches and they will take care of you...There are no promises of rewards for jobs...Sometimes I do a two week tour and do jobs every night. But it doesn't matter who goes over since all they care about is having good matches" (Torch, 8/20/94).

Zenk had worked intensively with AJPW during 1987-9 so there was no problem doing jobs - so long as the pay was good. But, as he was quick to discover, Dan Kroffat and Doug Furnas, despite five years continuous work for Baba and several years of getting "built up" were still being paid just \$2,500 a week - \$500 less than Zenk had been earning in Japan nine years previously. Zenk determined to complete his two contracted tours for "Summer Action Series" (July) and "Giant Series" (September-October, 1994) and then reconsider his Japan future.

In addition to Zenk, the American contingent for the Summer Action Series 1994 included Terry Gordy and his nephew Richard Slinger, Steve Williams who was being pushed to the Triple Crown, The Eagle (aka Jackie Fulton), Johnny Smith, Abdullah the Butcher, Giant Kimala II, Kurt Beyer and Johnny Ace. The series saw Zenk in some unusual pairings - with and against Stan Hansen and Doug Furnas in tag action, and pinning and being pinned by former IWA joint tag champ Dan Kroffat (now wrestling under the borrowed tag of "The Can-Am Express" with Doug Furnas).

The 1994 Summer Action Series was to be Zenk's penultimate tour of Japan.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Match details</b>	
<p>06/30/94 Tokyo, Korakuen Hall (TV taping) (2,100 sellout)</p>	<p>Dan Kroffat and Doug Furnas over Johnny Ace and Tom Zenk in 17:29 when Kroffat pinned Zenk after a somersault drop off the top rope.</p>	
<p>07/01/94 Katsuta (1,800 crowd)</p>	<p>Mitsuharu Misawa, Kenta Kobashi and Tsuyoshi Kikuchi over Stan Hansen, Tom Zenk and The Eagle (Jackie Fulton) in 17:27 when Kobashi pinned Eagle with a moonsault.</p>	
<p>07/03/94 Tokyo, Korakuen Hall (2,100 sellout)</p>	<p>Tom Zenk and Stan Hansen over Dan Kroffat and Doug Furnas in 11:54 when Hansen pinned Kroffat with the Lariat.</p>	
<p>07/04/94 Osaka (2,050 sellout)</p>	<p>Tsuyoshi Kikuchi over Tom Zenk in 10:02 with a rollup.</p>	
<p>07/06/94: Tokushima: no match 07/07/94: Marugame: no match 07/08/94: Kochi: no match</p>		

<p>07/09/94 Matsui</p>	<p>Dan Kroffat and Doug Furnas over Tom Zenk and Johnny Smith in 14:36 when Furnas pinned Zenk after a released German Suplex.</p>	<p>(TV Taping)  In Collection</p>
<p>07/12/94:Kagoshima (TV Taping) (3,500 sellout)</p>	<p>Mitsuharu Misawa, Kenta Kobashi and Tsuyoshi Kikuchi over Stan Hansen, Tom Zenk and Doug Furnas in 19:24 when Kobashi pinned Furnas with a moonsault.</p> <p>Main event - three and three quarter stars</p>	<p>(TV Taping)  In Collection</p>
<p>07/13/94 Miyazaki (3,050 sellout)</p>	<p>Dan Kroffat and Doug Furnas over Johnny Ace and Tom Zenk in 16:53 when Furnas pinned Zenk after a released German Suplex.</p>	
<p>07/14/94 Niage-town (2,400 sellout)</p>	<p>Yoshinari Ogawa and Tamon Honda over The Eagle and Tom Zenk in 13:02 when Ogawa pinned Zenk with a rolling crucifix cradle.</p>	
<p>07/16/94 Nagasaki Gym (3,500 crowd)</p>	<p>Tom Zenk and Stan Hansen over Dan Kroffat and Doug Furnas in 13:45 when Zenk pinned Kroffat with a counter rollup.</p>	
<p>07/17/94 Hakata Star Lane</p>	<p><b>Bruiser Brody Memorial Night</b> Steve Williams, Terry Gordy and Richard Slinger over The Eagle, Johnny Smith and Tom Zenk in 15:35 when Williams pinned Zenk with the Oklahoma Stampede powerslam.</p>	
<p>07/18/94 Onomichi (1,700 sellout)</p>	<p>Abdullah the Butcher and Giant Kimala II over The</p>	

	Eagle and Tom Zenk in 12:53 when Abdullah pinned Zenk with an elbow drop.	
07/19/94 Kurashiki (2,700 sellout)	Terry Gordy and Richard Slinger over Tom Zenk and Kurt Beyer (son of The Destroyer) in 13:43 when Slinger pinned Zenk after a splash off the top rope.	
07/21/94 Tokyo Korakuen Hall (2,100 sellout)	Tom Zenk over Kurt Beyer in 9:55 with a bulldog.	
07/22/94 Shimizu Gym (3,300 sellout)	Jun Akiyama and Tamon Honda over Tom Zenk and Kurt Beyer in 14:01 when Akiyama pinned Zenk with a Northern Lights Suplex.	
07/23/94 Kofu (4,400 sellout)	Steve Williams , Terry Gordy and Richard Slinger over Stan Hansen, Tom Zenk and Johnny Smith in 15:58 when Williams pinned Smith with the Doctor Bomb.	
07/25/94 Ishikawa (3,700 sellout)	Stan Hansen, Shohei "Giant" Baba and Takao Omori over Steve Williams, Johnny Ace and Tom Zenk in 14:14 when Hansen pinned Zenk with the Lariat.	
07/26/94 Ichinomiya (2,350 sellout)	Toshiaki Kawada, Akira Taue and Yoshinari Ogawa over Stan Hansen, Tom Zenk and Johnny Smith in 16:31 when Taue pinned Smith with the <i>nodowa</i> (chokeslam).	
07/28/94 Tokyo Budokan Hall (16,300 sellout)	Terry Gordy, Richard Slinger and Kurt Beyer over The Eagle, Tom Zenk and Johnny Smith in 14:28 when Gordy	

	powerbombed Zenk for the pin.	
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## Tom Zenk in Japan



### **(9) NinthTour - 1994 The Giant Series September 30 - October 22, 1994**

In late September 1994, Tom Zenk returned to Tokyo for "The Giant Series" (September 30 - October 22, 1994). The series occasioned the following commentary from the *Wrestling Observer Newsletter* (10/17/94) -

"All Japan Pro-Wrestling - The most traditional promotion in the world continues on a largely successful ride, making only minor adjustments along the way. Even though American critics sometimes dismiss the success of this group as something foreign, its entire booking strategy is actually patterned after the success of an American promotion, the old Sam Muchnick St.Louis office. All Japan in many ways is the least creative promotion in the world when it comes to booking and angles. It's also turned into the greatest argument in the world that far too much emphasis is placed on being overly creative in wrestling rather than doing the simple things, which - when put together with the right formula - draw consistent money. Like the old St. Louis office, All Japan does a patterned type of show and has a series of headliners who alternate beating one another cleanly on top, in a system where nobody seems to lose any steam by losing cleanly. If anything, All Japan has taken St. Louis one better, in that they've established a system where the guys actually gain steam by doing clean jobs. The other major difference is that while St. Louis has occasional screw-job finishes to build-up rematches... and occasional gimmick matches, All Japan eschews both completely."

With wrestling getting mainstream coverage in the Japan newspapers, All Japan placed little reliance on television, with programs either a one hour show late on Sunday night or a rotating 30 minute slot on Saturday nights airing anywhere between 2a.m. - 4a.m.

Despite this the big shows at Budokan Hall were automatically sold-out weeks in advance with "nearly \$1 million guaranteed everytime Budokan Hall is booked."

AJPW's strength according to WON derived from its in-ring wrestling featuring Kenta Kobashi and Toshiaki Kawada ("probably the two top wrestlers in the world today") plus "a strong group of mid card performers."

Unlike New Japan, AJPW had avoided talent deals with US promotions, preferring to bring in foreign talent identified by Baba and his bookers.

The result was a promotion which WON (10/24/94) described as receiving "continuous raves about presenting the best main event matches on the planet and some of the most consistently strong house shows."

In addition to Tom Zenk, foreign wrestlers recruited by Baba for the October 1994 series included Steve Williams, Stan Hansen, Johnny Ace, Dan Spivey, Doug Furnas, Dan Kroffat, Johnny Smith, The Eagle, The Falcon, Dory Funk Jr, and Chris Candido who had been wrestling in Smokey Mountain Wrestling and was debuting in Japan. Candido was destined to job for most of the series with a few opening match wins. Zenk was given a more consistent push, appearing in the upper mid card and main event including the All Japan 22nd Anniversary Memorial Match (see above). There, in what was to be his final Japan match - Zenk tagged against the three men who had built AJPW and given Zenk his break in Japan - Giant Baba, Jumbo Tsuruta and Dory Funk, Jr.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Match details</b>	
9/30/94 Opening night Kasumigaseki (2,200 crowd) (TV taping)	Dan Kroffatt and Doug Furnas over Takao Omori and Tom Zenk	
10/01/94 Yokosura (2,9900 sellout)	Tom Zenk and Dan Spivey over The Eagle and The Falcon	
10/02/94 Korakuen Hall (2,100 sellout)	Tom Zenk over Masao Inoue	
10/04/94 Takaoka	Dory Funk Jr. and Johnny Smith over Dan Spivey and Tom Zenk	
10/5/94 Osaka	Tom Zenk and Johnny Smith over Dory Funk Jr. and Chris Candido	

Furitsu Gym II (1,850 crowd) (arena fan- cam)		
10/7/94 Kumamoto	Tom Zenk and Johnny Smith over Masao Inoue and Mighty Inoue	
10/8/94 Fukuoka (2,050 crowd)	Dan Spivey and Johnny Smith over Dory Funk Jr and Tom Zenk	
10/11/94 Fukui (2,300 sellout)	<b>Main Event</b>  Toshiaki Kawada, Akira Taue and Masa Fuchi over Steve Williams, Johnny Ace and Tom Zenk	
10/12/94 Gifu (2,800 sellout)	The Eagle and The Falcon over Johnny Smith and Tom Zenk	
10/13/94 Shizuoka (2,800 crowd) (TV taping)	Tom Zenk, Steve Williams and Johnny Ace vs Stan Hansen, Dan Spivey and Johnny Smith	
10/15/94 Nagaoka (3,250 sellout)	Giant Baba and Stan Hansen over Johnny Ace and Tom Zenk	
10/16/94 Murakami (1,500 crowd)	Tom Zenk over Masao Inoue	
10/17/94 Fukushima (2,150 sellout)	Toshiaki Kawada, Akira Taue and Masa Fuchi over Steve Williams, Johnny Ace and Tom Zenk	
10/18/94 Hoshiro (2,200 sellout)	no match	
10/19/94 Hirosaki (3,300 sellout)	<b>Main Event</b>  Mitsuharu Misawa, Kenta Kobashi and Jun Akiyama over Steve	



	Williams, Johnny Ace and Tom Zenk (21.06)	
10/20/94 Hachinohe (3,350 sellout)	Tamon Honda and Takao Omori over Dory Funk Jr., and Tom Zenk	
10/ 22/94 Budokan Hall Tokyo (16,300 sellout) (TV taping)	<b>All Japan 22nd Anniversary Memorial Match</b> Giant Baba, Jumbo Tsuruta and Dory Funk, Jr. over The Eagle, Johnny Smith and Tom Zenk when Tsuruta pinned Zenk with the back suplex	<b>TV Taping – In Collection</b>