

1991



新日プロ vs WCW World Championship Wrestling

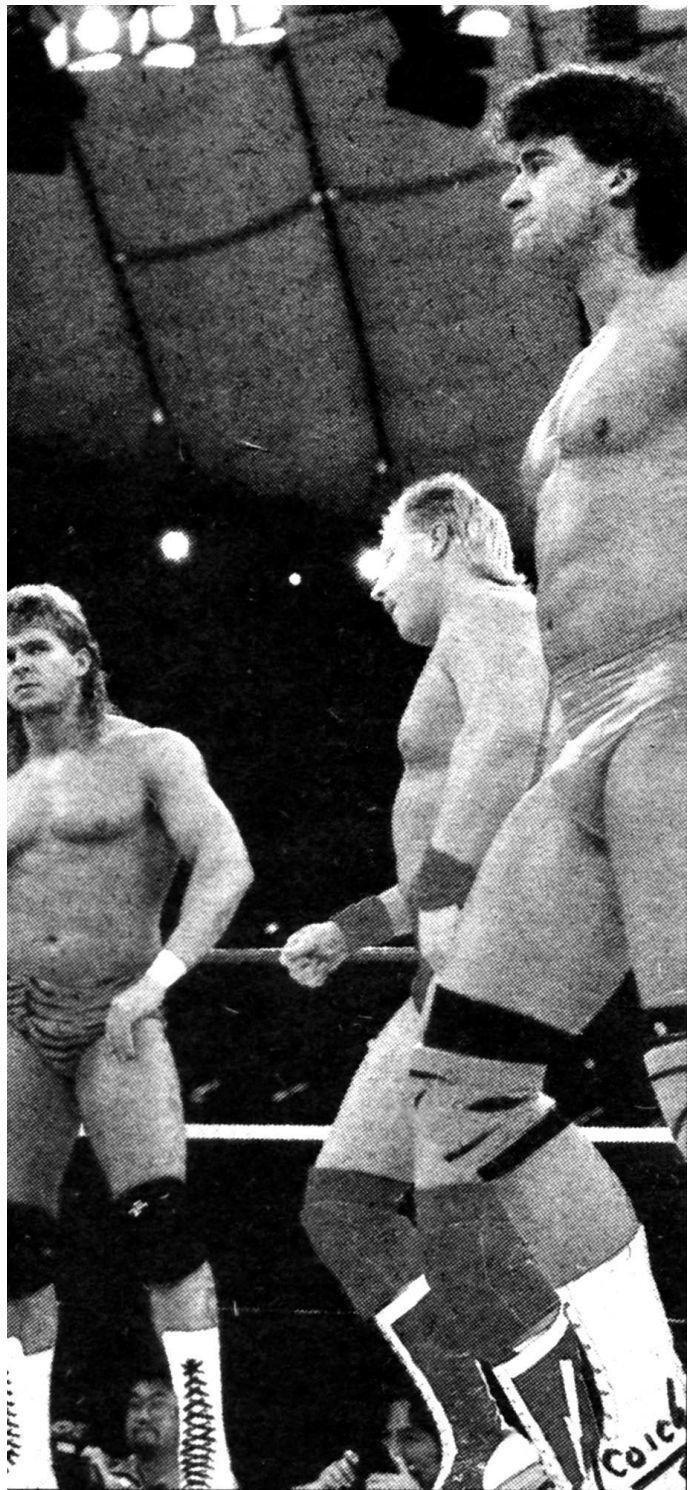
NEW JAPAN/WCW STARRCADE '91

March 21, 1991

Having competed in the AJPW Summer Action Series in July 1989, Tom had been asked back for the October '89 series - but in the meantime had been contacted by NWA. Given the heat between NWA and All Japan, and given that signing with NWA meant burning a bridge with Baba, Tom held out for a two year contract from NWA and an exemption from working NWA matches with Baba's rival, New Japan.

This was respected until 1991, when Tom was booked by Dusty Rhodes for the New Japan/WCW Supershow at the Tokyo Egg Dome.

For the first few weeks of Rhodes' tenure as booker, Pillman had been working Mike Graham to set up a light heavyweight division that 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. Rhodes, however, had no intention of pushing anyone other than his son.





21 March, 1991 - The New Japan/WCW Supershow, held at the Tokyo Egg Dome, drew a crowd of 64,500 and a gate in excess of \$3,000,000 to see the two federations clash. In the second match of the card, Shiro Koshinaka, Kuniaki Kobayashi and Takayuki Iizuka defeated Tim Horner, Brian Pillman and Tom Zenk at 12.10.





Wednesday 3.20.1991 - "All the wrestlers and company officials along with the press met at the Keio Plaza Hotel for a luncheon. The way everything was handled gave this show the aura of a hot heavyweight title fight. The difference in the overall respect that the business and sport of pro-wrestling have in Japan as compared to the United States is overwhelming.... When Antonio Inoki walked in, it was not like a celebrity had just entered the room, it was more like George Bush [Snr].... Whatever product mix one favors in regards to pro-wrestling ... the fact is that the Japanese style enables the sport (and you can't argue the word 'sport' doesn't apply here) to have a level of respect and mainstream popularity that the product mix in the US simply doesn't allow ... There are no babyfaces and heels, at least in the exaggerated sense. The heat comes from action in the ring rather than personal characteristics..." (Dave Meltzer; WON 04/01/91)



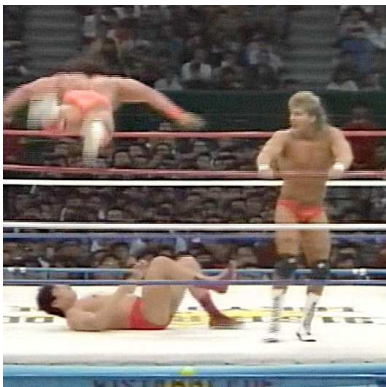


The Supershow crowd set an all-time indoor sports attendance record for Japan meaning that, with Wrestlemania III, at Pontiac Silverdome, Tom Zenk had wrestled, at that time, the two biggest shows in the history of both U.S. and Japanese wrestling.





▲Zマンことトム・ジック。もちろん新日マットへは初登場となる。



Thursday 03.21.1991

"A few hours before show time ...most of the Japanese wrestlers [were] doing either light weight work, jogging or ...squats.. A few Americans, most notably Brian Pillman, got in the ring to continually test the ropes. Some of the other WCW personnel, particularly Jim Ross, Rick Steiner and Tony Schavione were taking photos of the building like tourists. At about 1 p.m. they did a run through of the opening ceremony in which, on the giant screen, they would list the match and then have interviews and/or angles that set up the match. The sound system in the Dome is the best of any arena I've ever been in. Shortly after that, they opened the door to fans..... The show started at 3 p.m.. with about a ten minute long opening ceremony on the big screen. Ring announcer Hideki Tanaka would announce the match, which appeared on the big screen, and then one side or individual and then the other would do an interview. The interviews were done the previous morning at the hotel and most were done in American style. The fans laughed at the Japanese doing American interviews." (Dave Meltzer, WON 04/01/91)

The Match *"The plan," according to Tom, "was to work the match Japan-style with one hot move after another. We'd worked out three or more high spots each, with the idea of showcasing each of the guys. Brian's plan, however, was to do a thousand spots and basically look after himself, while giving Horner and me the cold tag. By now, I knew Brian well enough to just work around him. I opened the match with three dropkicks on Kobayashi. Pillman came in and used a series of stiff chops that could be heard in the cheap seats. As the match went on, Horner and I did the solid stuff, Brian and I the high flying and Pillman the flashier moves, including a Satoru Sayama splash off the top rope."*

After several hot near falls, Iizuka pinned Horner (at 12:10) with a Dragon suplex. It had been a good cold Japan match with some nice spots and good crowd reaction – pretty much what it was supposed to be. Meltzer scored it three and three quarter stars - second behind The Steiners vs Hiroshi Hase and Kensuke Sasaki, which he considered "a definite match of the year candidate." (WON 04/01/91).

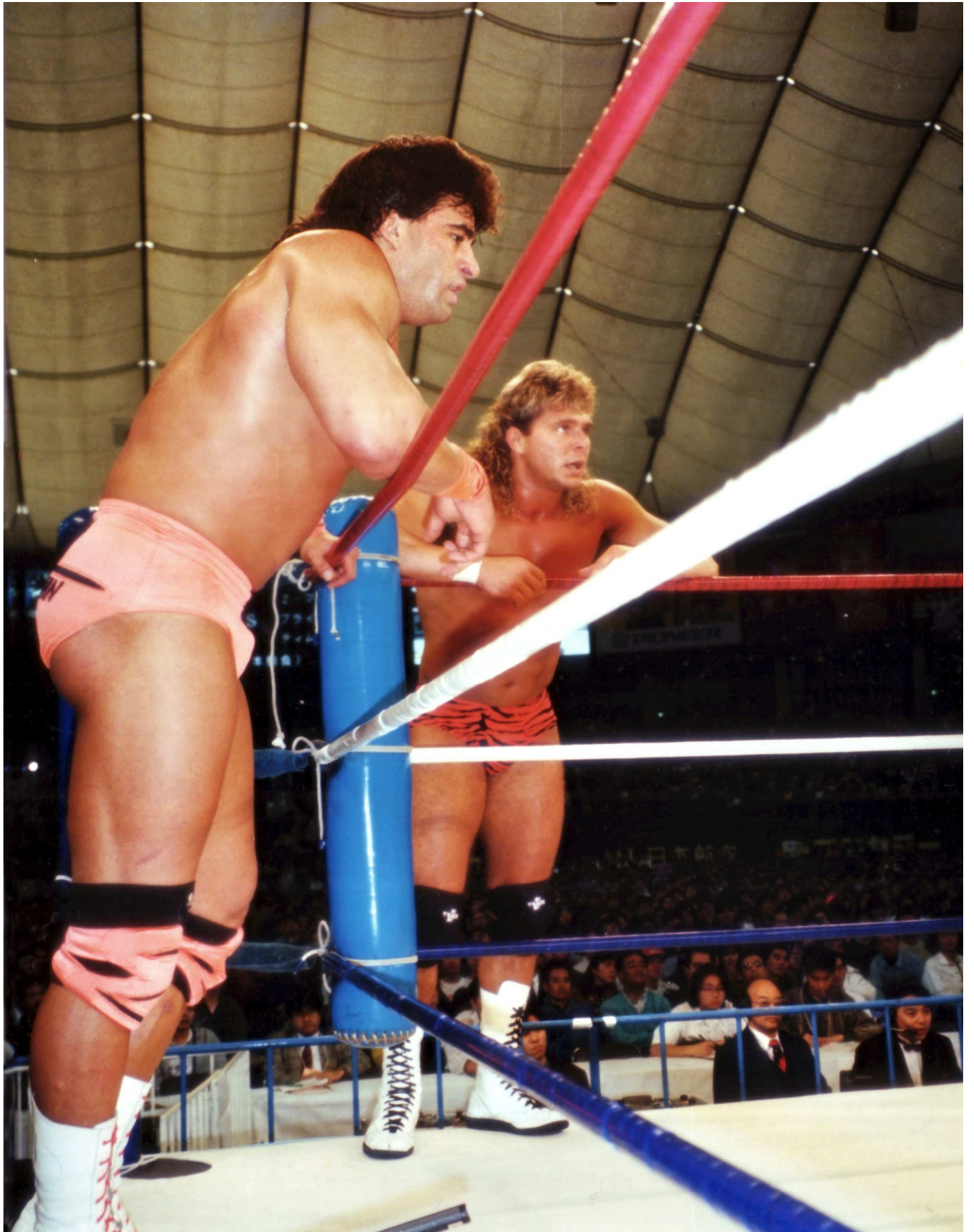


The U.S cut

Back in the US, the whole show was edited from four and a half hours down to one hour fifty minutes. The six-man tag match was cut to seven minutes or roughly half the match. Meltzer who had seen both the live event and the US PPV told his readers "The six-man tag match was a lot better LIVE because half the match was edited outsupposedly to show Pillman as the star." In case US fans didn't get the point, Jim Ross underlined throughout his commentary - "In my estimation Pillman is the HOTTEST guy - he's the STAR of this match....." According to Meltzer - "everyone in the match, except Kobayashi, looked very good." while Pro Wrestling Illustrated rated "Brian Pillman, Tom Zenk and Tim Horner's high powered accounting of themselves against the equally athletic Kuniaki Kobayashi, Takayuki Iizuka and Shiro Koshinaka" among the "more memorable moments" of the supercard.

Review - "The match itself was hard to get used to at first, because we, as wrestling fans, have gotten used to some truly incredibly displays of high flying, and exciting opening match wrestling in the past 18 years, and to see this, I wasn't even conscious, at first, that that's what they were going for. As the match unfolded, though, it became more clear, and I actually found myself impressed, not with Pillman or the Japanese guys, and certainly not with Horner, but instead with Tom Zenk. What the shit happened to Tom Zenk? The guy had an amazing look for the early 90s, and his offense was actually really fun to watch. To say nothing of how fluid a team he and Pillman were." (rajah.com).





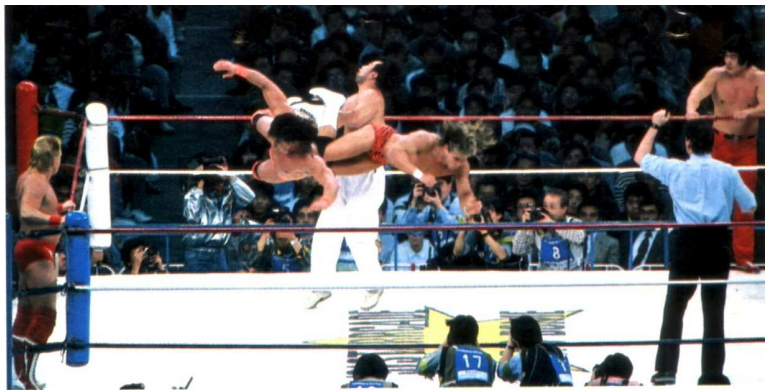






3月21日
東京ドーム

▶Z・マンとビルマンのダブル・ドロップキックが鮮やかに決まった



WCWからドームに吹いた春一番 目を見張ったビルマンの急成長。ライガーの好敵手となるか

▼6人タッグマッチ(30分一本勝負)
越中詩郎 12分10秒、ドラゴ
小林邦昭
ス・スープレックス
ス・ホールド
T・ホーナー
B・ビルマン

▶Z・マンが抱え上げたところへ、ビルマンのドロップキックが飛んで来た。何という跳躍力なんだ!



▼これもZ・マンとビルマンの連携。ビルマンがロープに反動をつけ、Z・マン得意のスワン・ダイブが飯塚へ



▶飯塚も負けじと、ビルマンとホーナーへ同時にドロップキックを見舞った



・熱戦に終止符を打ったのは飯塚のドラゴン・スープレックス



第1試合が新日本の十八番・8人タッグマッチだったため、新日本、WCW提携マッチ第一弾となった第2試合。アメリカン・スタイルが新日本マットとうまく融合するかどうかを見極める意味でも注目された一戦だったが、そうした不安はゴンクが鳴るや一掃されてしまった。

Z・マン、ビルマン、ホーナーの3人は6メートル50センチ四方のリングを、有効に使う術を知っていた。とにかくひっきりなしに宙を飛び回る。

ドロップキック、ボディプレス、ダイビング・ラリアット、プランチャ。これらの技を3人が入れ替わり立ち替わり放つため、試合の流れに休符がまったくないのである。

Z・マン(トム・シンク)は過去数度に渡る全日本マットにおける活躍ぶりを考えれば、驚くことはないのだが、目を見張ったのがビルマンの成長ぶり。

平成元年4月に新日本マットに初来日した時は、大して注目されなかったが、WCW入りしてからは水を得た魚のように空中を駆けめぐり、「フライング」ブライアンの異名をとった。決して体は大きくないが、そのぶん動きが小気味よい。こと空中戦に関しては、新日本のどの「戦士」よりも「見栄え」があった。

今後、ひんぱんに来日して新日本スタイルを吸収すれば、ライガーのライバルとなることは間違いない。エグイサイドバスターやバツクドロップを放ったホーナーともども、何度でも新日本のマットに来てもいいものだ。