

My Wrestling Journey



The travels of Our Man from Down Under

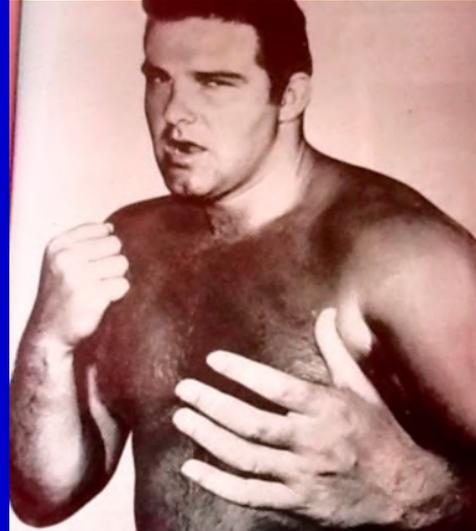
John Shelvey

Part 13: Cage Match

Sydney Stadium
Friday the 3rd of December 1965.***



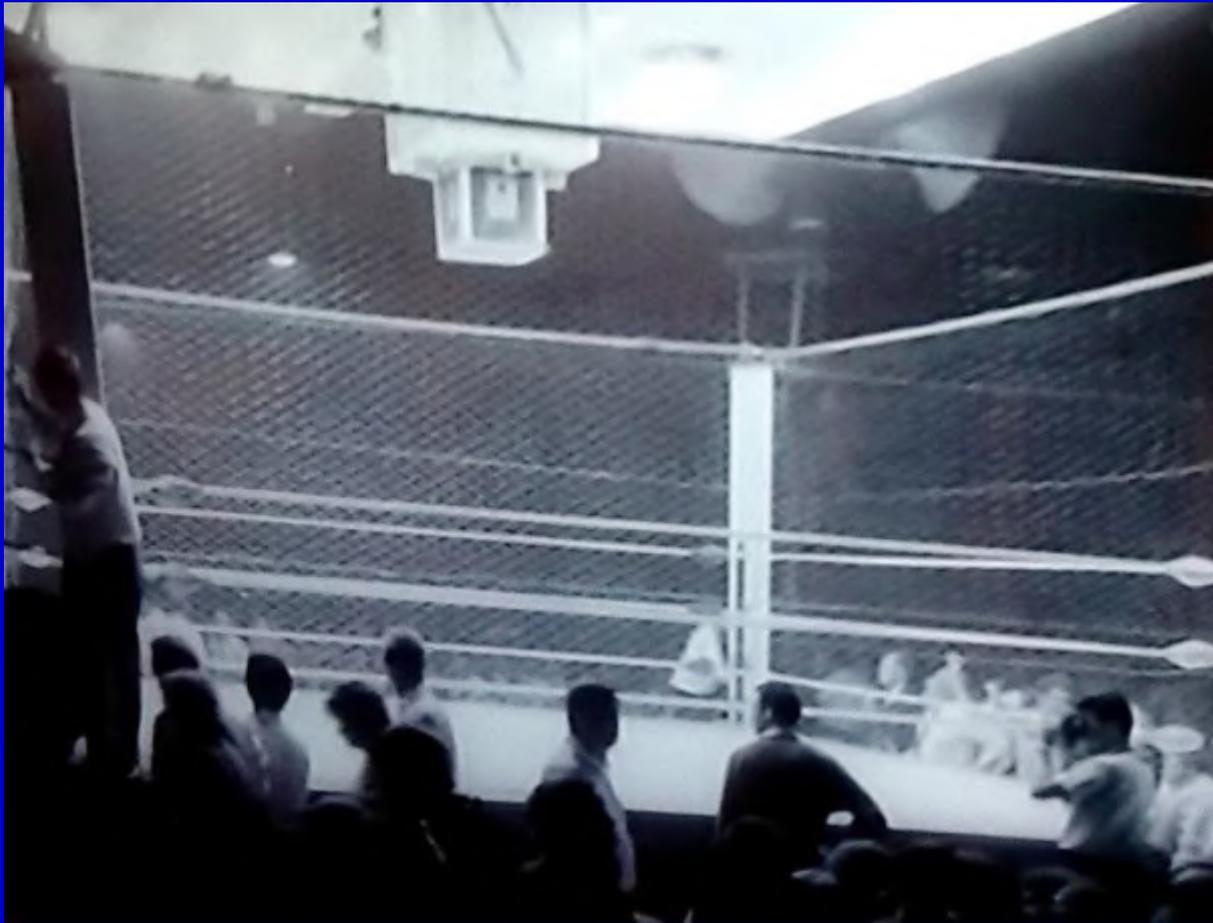
Skull Murphy
The Original



Mark Lewin

v

WRESTLING
World Championship
WRESTLING
STADIUM TONIGHT, 8.15
MAIN EVENT
Mark Lewin v Skull Murphy,
RING CAGED BY HEAVY
WIRE NET,
Spiros Arion v. Red Bastien;
Joe Hamilton and Tom Hamilton
v. Karl Gotch and Ron Reed;
King Curtis v. Roy Heffernan.
Prices: 25/ Ringside, 15/ 10/
Res.: Alan Kippax, David Jones
and Stadium, 32-5352.



The Quiet Before The Storm

Sit down in front!

Cage erected for wrestling

Mark Lewin and Skull Murphy will be caged in the ring for their wrestle at Sydney Stadium tomorrow night. The mesh curtains will be assembled on the four sides of the ring and dropped from the ceiling after the wrestlers enter the ring.

The pair will wrestle until one man submits.

Sydney Morning Herald newspaper

Somewhere, directly inline with the cage seen above, back some fifteen rows or so, I sat among the upwards of thirteen thousand fans, who squeezed themselves onto the wooden benches of the Sydney Stadium to witness the city's (probably Australia's) first cage match.

The two men who would be locking horns that night, could not have been more different. The contest would be a battle of quintessentials. The tall, dark, handsome hero, Mark Lewin and the bald, heavy-set, permanently brooding, villain with the gravel voice, Skull Murphy. Murphy was a curiosity, in that it wasn't just his skull (said to be 'two to three times thicker than the average mans') that was sans hair; his whole body, which always seemed pale to the point of appearing to be whitewashed, was totally hairless. It was said that the Canadian had suffered from an early childhood disease, (most likely alopecia) and even his eyebrows were hairless, which I would imagine would make life very difficult when he was outdoors, in the sun and perspiring and likewise in a stadium or t.v. studios when sweat from his brow would run unhindered into his eyes. Skull, was usually seen in sun glasses when he wasn't wrestling. His odd look however, only enhanced his reputation as a top tier villain, as his in-ring work was solid enough for him to match any of the good guy brigade and indeed, he had beaten Red Bastien in the final of a one night tourney not long before the cage match against Lewin, add to that, his pairing with Brute Bernard with who he had held many major tag team titles with and you had a fiery force to be reckoned with.

At Sydney Stadium
 Young Zorro (12 stone) drew with Ken Madlen (12-2) Roy Helfernan (16-12) beat King Curtis (26 stone) 1-0. Tag team: Joe Hamilton (17-2) and Tony Martin (17 stone) beat Karl Gotch (17-12) and Ron Reed (16-4) 2-0. Spyros Arlos (20-4) beat Red Bastien (16-1) 2-1. Special challenge match in cage: Mark Lewin (17-8) beat Skull Murphy (17-12) 1-0.

The match was standard fare for the two, which in their case was one

of ebb and flow, as first one man, then the other would appear to have the upper hand, only for their opponent to make a brave comeback (Lewin) or perform a dastardly deed (Murphy) to turn the tide. It was the 'before' and 'after' the match, that has most stuck in my memory of that night.

Before :

There was a roar of adulation and support as Lewin jogged down the slope towards the ring. Once at ringside he looked at the cage, had a quick confab with Sammy Menacker and then turned on his heel and jogged back up the slope, disappearing towards the dressing rooms, with Menacker calling after him. It soon became apparent what had needed the New York native. The wire mesh enclosing the ring had been pulled to the floor, there was no door in the mesh to allow entry (or exit), so how was our hero to 'take to the stage'? Apparently they had indicated to Lewin that they were willing to roll the mesh up, just enough for Lewin to 'roll' into the ring and he had quite rightly told them to 'go thee forth and multiply'! Five minutes later and the wire had been lifted high enough for the good guy to step into the ring, albeit he did have to squeeze sideways to get through the space.

(The climax of the match, as we all could have guessed with another year of American wrestling viewing experience, had Lewin a bloody mess, as Murphy laid in the head-butts (remember the extraordinary thickness of that skull, as we were informed) and raked his

Big crowd expected at wrestling

Promoters expect a capacity crowd at the Stadium tonight when wrestlers Mark Lewin and Skull Murphy meet.

The ring will be enclosed by a steel mesh cage and the match will continue until one man submits.

Falls do not count.

Other matches, which will be conducted in a regulation ring, are Spiros Arlos v Red Bastien, King Curtis v Roy Helfernan, and a special tag-team bout between Joe and Tom Hamilton, who arrived from the United States this week, and Karl Gotch and Ron Reed.

The first match is at 8.15 p.m.

opponents forehead across the mesh for what seemed like an eternity). Totally out of control, Murphy was disqualified.



Mark Lewin will wear a special helmet to counteract the head-butts of bald wrestler Skull Murphy in their return match at Sydney Stadium tomorrow night. In Murphy's favour is the fact that Lewin will not be allowed to use his favourite "sleeper" hold.

After:

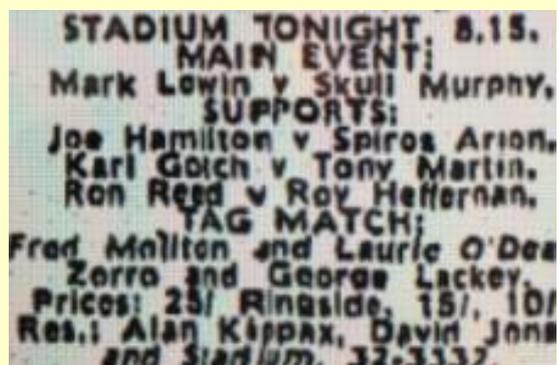
Eventually, the match over, Lewin is loaded onto a stretcher, I jump from my seat and quickly make my way over to a vantage point under which Lewin will pass and I will score the most incredible snapshot. With fans anxiously crowding around the heavily laden stretcher, the two stretcher bearers are making slow progress towards my 'perfect' pitch.

Here they come. Lewin is lying on his back, comatose, his black hair tinted with red blood. He is wearing black boots, blue trunks and his face is a mask of light and dark red blood that runs down over his neck and chest and I have a COLOUR film in my camera. They are almost underneath me, I take a deep breath

and as his lifeless body appears in the tiny camera screen, click goes the camera shutter. The one remaining flash bulb that sits unused in the flash cube, on top of the camera, DOES NOT FLASH! Lewin and his bearers, pass out of sight and I can only stare speechless at the piece of 'expletive deleted' in my hand. There will be no nights of dining out on 'that' photo!



Spiros Arion defends his "world" heavyweight wrestling championship against top-ranking American Joe Hamilton in a one-hour match at the Stadium tonight. In another one-hour bout Mark Lewin and Skull Murphy wrestle a return match under special conditions. Lewin will not use his sleeper hold, but will wear a boxer's headgear to protect him from Murphy's butts. Other matches are Karl Gotch v Tony Martin; Ron Reed v Roy Heffernan; Fred Molitor v Zorro and Larry O'Dea v George Lackey. The first match is at 8.15 p.m. After tonight's program the Stadium will close for wrestling until January 7.



STADIUM TONIGHT, 8.15.
MAIN EVENT:
Mark Lewin v Skull Murphy,
SUPPORTS:
Joe Hamilton v Spiros Arion,
Karl Gotch v Tony Martin,
Ron Reed v Roy Heffernan,
TAG MATCH:
Fred Molitor and Laurie O'Dea
v Zorro and George Lackey.
Prices: 25/- Ringside, 15/-, 10/-
Res.: Alan Kippax, David Jones
and Stadium, 32-3337.

There was of course another match between the pair, Lewin would have to go back to the States a beaten man, or seek revenge, and he chose the latter. That match, I didn't deign to attend. Mark had appeared on t.v. wearing a motorcycle helmet (as well as his trunks and boots I hasten to add) telling Sammy Menacker that he would be wearing the headwear to combat Murphy's head butt (three times thicker etc.) and in return he would not be using his 'sleeper' hold.

As somewhat a traditionalist, watching a wrestling match where one of the contestants (and the hero to boot) would be wearing a crash helmet was beyond the pale, especially as I don't believe Murphy's head butt was ever considered illegal! In the end, Lewin had a

change of heart, at least to the extent that he actually wore a boxers headgear, which didn't look as silly and of course he won the match. (So that was nice)!

The other reason I decided not to go to 'Helmet Match' was it would have been the fourth straight week, that the guy with hair, would tussle with the bald bloke and I thought that would be a case of 'gliding the lilly' somewhat. I think that the boys would soon be heading

home for Christmas and I guess 'they' didn't want to start any new feuds or just present matches without back stories.

Sydney Stadium				
Arthur	Openhaw	12 4	drew	
with Ein	Molitor	12.0.	Larry	
O'Dea	16.4	beat	George La -er	
15.12.	1-0.	Roy	Hollernan 16 10	
beat	Ron Reed	16.4.	1-0.	Karl
Gotch	17.8	drew	with Tony Mar-	
lin	17.2.	World Title	Spring	
Arion	20.4	beat	Joe Hamilton	
17.4.	2-1.	Special Feature:	Mark	
Lewin	17.8	beat	Skull Murohr	
17.12.	2-1.			

John Shelby

My thanks go to my good mate ED LOCK, for confirmation of the date of the cage match and also the clippings, (I always feel sceptical of a date without secondary evidence).

Ed, just by the by, probably should be known as the 'Oracle', as what he doesn't know about professional wrestling could be lost on the back of a postage stamp. Additional to his knowledge of the History of the game, I believe given a free hand to 'book' for any of the major promotions, anywhere in the UK, Europe, USA, Canada, Japan etc. he would today, have been revered by wrestlers and fans alike.