

# My Wrestling Journey



*The travels of Our Man from Down Under*

# John Shelvey

## Part 14: Ten Little Indians, And Then There Was One

The first Sydney Stadium, Ten Man Battle Royal\*\* I ever witnessed, was cleverly used to ignite three new rivalries, see bad guys fall out, which led to a brawl of monumental proportions and give a newcomer to Australian rings a big win to kick off his visit.

After some ten minutes of mayhem, it became apparent that Killer Kowalski and newly arrived Waldo von Erich, two desperate, dastardly, desperadoes, were in cahoots. Like a couple of crafty hyenas, they prowled around the ring, keeping to the ropes, alert for a kill. When they saw a wrestler fall or stagger, they'd pounce, rushing in and tossing the unfortunate to the concrete floor. Soon, apart from these two very large and dangerous men, only the young, newly arrived Nick Bockwinkle remained. Just like said hyenas, the two villains circled their pray, looking for an opening, an opportunity to nobble and gobble the poor lad. After a few minutes of rearguard action, keeping the menace away, Nicky, second generation wrestler, son of legendary strongman Warren Bockwinkle, was downed in the far corner from where I sat and there he would stay for the next five minutes, as Kowalski and the 'German' took turns putting their outsize boots into the ever deflating body of their prey. It seemed that at any moment Nick was to be tossed into the far flung reaches of the Stadium and the bad guys would splitting a cool \$1,000 (almost \$14,000 today).



Nick Bockwinkle. Following in daddy's footsteps.



Waldo. Sometimes he was a steel helmeted storm trooper, other times an officer!



Killer Kowalski shows what to do with the annoying paparazzi.

Von Erich finished a stint of shining his boots on Nick's torso and then watched on as the Killer took over the attack. Then after a short rest, the German marched across the ring to ostensibly resume the aggravated assault and battery, on the now totally deflated Nick, but suddenly changed course and planted his boot firmly on the Killer's rear end and whooshka, sent him over the ropes and into the front row! The Killer picked himself up and searched the ring, looking for the interloper who had snuck into it and unceremoniously booted him out. He quickly realised he'd been royally shafted by his partner in crime and after exchanging words with his former pal, he stormed off to the dressing sheds.

So, that left Waldo von Erich to just put in a few more stomps to Nick's body and then to simply toss him out of the ring and the \$1,000 would be awarded to the son of the Fatherland. 'Thieves fall out' and 'cheats never prosper' it is said, so it shouldn't have been the shock it was to the assembled thousands, when the Killer suddenly reappeared and interfered with Waldo to the extent that as the German remonstrated with Kowalski, Nick Bockwinkle hit him with a missile of a drop kick, sending his tormentor over the top rope, winning the Battle Royal, winning the \$1,000 and setting up a von Erich, Kowalski feud.



Nick leaving the ring bloodied, courtesy of the Killer.  
(I took this snap from the same position that the flash failed after the Lewin/Murphy cage match.  
See Part 13).

The next day on the t.v. Von Erich interfered with the Bockwinkle, Kowalski match, causing the Killer to lose, Nick had once again, on the verge of defeat, been saved by enemy fire, two wins he knew little about! Of course this meant that soon we would have the almost unthinkable, a main event between the hated Killer Kowalski and the sneering, jackbooted von Erich.

On the Monday morning after the announcement of the matchup between the two villains, my uncle Dick, who I worked with, said he'd come with me to the matches on that night, in fact he'd drive me there. This came as a surprise, as he was one of 'those people' who derided wrestling, while seemingly never missing the weekly televised matches. He'd come in to work on a Monday, with a smile on his face and say 'did you see the wrestling on Saturday, what a laugh.' He'd then proceed to regale me with what happened during the

whole telecast, regardless of the fact that I assured him that 'yes' I had indeed viewed it. However, he did have a glaring soft spot for the Killer and when he arrived to pick me up to go to the show, he seemed to be pretty excited. Usually the first and often the second matches on the card, would be yawn-fests, but not on that night, as first up were Brits Spike Robson and Arthur Oppenshaw who set the tone for a great night of wrestling. So good was the fare, that at the interval, my uncle asked me 'Is it always this good'? to which I replied 'Oh yes'. (John, you little liar) To my surprise my uncle shouted and applauded throughout all the matches and when his hero Killer Kowalski gave von Erich a monumental thrashing in the main event, he was almost hoarse by the end of the match. He had regained his composure by the time he dropped me home, staying long enough to answer my mum's question 'Did you enjoy it?' by smiling and replying 'yes, it was pretty good actually'. After he left my mother asked me what he had really thought about it, I replied immediately 'he loved it'!

Bockwinkle and his two protagonists met again in Sydney, Melbourne and South Australia as the revolving tour progressed, but of course unless I saw the odd results in an American magazine, I was not to know that until the advent of the Internet. Oh and I should add, that on the night of the 'Battle of the Bad Guys' Kowalski was overwhelmingly the crowd's favourite. Uncle Dick wasn't a bad judge of wrestler after all.

\*\*Battle Royals (some liked Royale.'Presumptuous, moi?) I never liked the name Russian Roulette that some promoters used for a similar type match. They rarely involved Russia or Russians and as far as I could see Roulette had nothing to do with anything, unless the promoters were trying to send a message that 'death' was possible, after all there were the 'Texas Death' matches (plenty of blood, but I don't know of any deaths). Was there ever a Dorset Death Match, or a Shropshire Death Match? 'Cricklewood, or Shoreham-by the -Sea death match sounds a bit soft, don't you think?