

My Wrestling Journey



The travels of Our Man from Down Under

John Shelvey

**Part 16:
Big John and the Best Laid Plans of Mice and Men
(almost go astray)**



Comedian Frankie Howard would have said 'yes, no, I mean, my gasted has never been so flabber' !

I was shocked to see enter the ring and ensconce himself in a corner, none other than Duke Of Edinburgh Main Event chappie, John Da Silva! It seemed like only yesterday that the huge Kiwi and home favourite Tibor Szakacs had entranced the Royal Albert Hall crowd and the huge television audience (of which I was one) with a good clean, hard tussle eventuating in the HHHHH Hungarian (there I go again, channeling Arkwright) gratefully accepting Philip's award. I wonder what ever became of that figurine?

Actually, it had been around two years since that televisual feast (channeling Basil Fawlty now) and Big John, after some years away from his native home, had clocked in to Sydney as his last Port of Call, before eventually heading off on the last leg of his journey back to New Zealand. Into the far corner, from my point of view, stepped the Blond Bomber, Ray Stevens, back again to incite the Aussie crowds with his rule bending shenanigans. I was pretty convinced that as wrestling was a 'work' (what did he just say) then there could only be one winner in the next twenty minutes or so and it wasn't going to be the grappler from the 'Land of the Long White Cloud'.



Aeroplane spin, comes before crash and burn.



My favourite picture of John with Mighty Jack Dempsey.



The blonde bomber spent as much time in the air as on the mat, just for our entertainment.

Stevens was here to main event and his initial hors d'oeuvre would be Maori on toast! The match went as expected, Stevens working his villainous magic and John replying with big forearms and throws which sent Stevens pinwheeling all over the ring. Eventually after John had thrown him yet again, Stevens like the 'Beautiful Balloon' in the hit song, went 'up, up and away' disappearing over the top rope and out of my sight, to the concrete floor. The referee started to toll the twenty

count, but at around '13' there was no sign of the missing Stevens. At '16' Sammy Menacker the 'good guy announcer' who always showed disdain for the heel fraternity, took off from his seat like an Olympic sprinter, raced around the ring, disappeared momentarily as he ducked

below the ring apron, then surfaced like a lifeguard with a drowning man and bodily pushed Stevens under the bottom rope, just in time for the referee Hunter Shaw, to stop playing statues and declare '19'.

Menacker went back to his seat, Stevens on all fours, shook his head groggily, Da Silva stood in the corner nearest me, which was also close to where Menacker was sitting at the timekeepers desk. Stevens then crawled over to Menacker on his hands and knees and Sam left his seat again and clearly said something to the spaced out grappler.

Da Silva slowly left the safety of his corner and approached the still crouched Stevens, who suddenly brought his arm up between the Kiwi's legs. John went down in a heap, Stevens covered him and the bout was over, albeit not with the planned finish I'm sure. Da Silva limped back to the dressing sheds, Stevens was helped back by a second and the crowd was left to digest the fact that good guy Sammy Menacker had just helped bad boy Ray Stevens from being kayoed in his very first Sydney return match.

Next time 'The jokes on me'!