

By Art Chansky

Killer's Claw, Pepper's Tummy—What A Craze!

Almost allowing myself to get talked into intramural wrestling the other day brings back some hysterical memories of a professional sports craze that swept the nation less than a decade ago—pro wrestling.

Although the sport still exists and the pro tour continues to sneak in and out of many American cities, all the glamour and mania that once made the spectacle a top attraction has died.

Names like Eduard Carpentier and Gorilla Monsoon once drew rowdy and capacity crowds into the huge arenas throughout the country, momentarily pushing to the background professional

basketball and hockey. Thousands of fervent fans jammed big name auditoriums such as Madison Square Garden, Boston Garden and San Francisco's Cow Palace to watch the grapplers pound each other into the mat.

The ironic thing about the whole craze was that it was a big hoax, and everyone that went to watch knew it.

Every drop kick, flying mare and airplane spin was preplanned, and the outcome of every match was known before any of the monsters climbed between the ropes.

But the fans loved it. The harder someone got hit, the better they liked it. The more

shenanigans that went on would just bring the crowd back again for the next scheduled card.

Probably the most popular champion of the time was Killer Kowolski, the enormous dum-dum that used the feared abdominal claw hold to punish his opponents.

Kowolski took the championship from Carpentier and held it for almost five years. Then the wrestling promoters cleaned up more than any other period, because the more times the unpopular Kowolski successfully defended his title, the fans became that much more anxious to see him lose

it. Two of Kowolski's matches especially stand out, both of which enraged the fans to the point of almost going after the Killer themselves.

The first involved a veteran pro wrestler named Lou Thesz whose most potent weapon was something called the Greco-Roman backdrop. Thesz pinned Kowolski to begin their two-of-three fall match by dumping Killer on his head and pouncing on him while the referee dramatically banged the mat three times to the delight of the fanatical crowd.

Kowolski evened the score shortly after by using his claw hold which was supposed to rip his opponents' stomachs apart. He got Thesz on the mat and then dived into his mid-section like a leopard stalking his prey. Shortly before the end of the time limit, Thesz pinned

Kowolski to apparently capture the title, but the referee claimed that one of Killer's legs was under the ropes, nullifying the victory. The crowd went berserk.

The referee, whose name has since been forgotten, was immediately stripped of his license by the wrestling commission and decided to become a grappler himself. In his first bout the following night, he was pinned in thirty seconds of the introduction.

The other Kowolski match was against little Pepper Gomez, the man with the cast

iron stomach. Everyone thought Gomez was a cinch to take the title, because his tough midriff couldn't be penetrated by Kowolski's claw. But after Pepper airplane spinned the Killer into a pin, the match ended in a draw when Kowolski rallied to knock Gomez cold with what was supposed to be an illegal punch.

The two met once more on a Saturday afternoon television wrestling show called "Bedlam in Boston." Gomez, boasting

his cast iron tummy, challenged Kowolski to climb to the top of the ring post and jump on his stomach. The Killer accepted the invitation, but instead of jumping on the Pepper's abdomen, he leaped from the ropes crashing down with a knee drop on Gomez's neck. You can imagine what followed. They were still hitting each other over the head with wooden chairs when the show went off the air.

And finally, there were the

women. One famous tag team of June Byers, the girl's heavy champ, and the Blonde Bombshell had a post-match ritual in which they grabbed each of their opponents in a headlock and after a running start smashed their noggins together in the center of the ring.

The women would wrestle last when there was no championship bout scheduled and many times it was a fitting ending for the epitomes of femininity.

North Dakota State Hot On Trail Of San Diego

NEW YORK (UPI)—It's hard to believe that a team with a 9-0 record is helpless, but that's North Dakota State's current situation.

The Bison, who completed their regular season schedule last week, know their hopes for derailing San Diego State from a third consecutive small college championship lies completely with the unbeaten Aztecs.

San Diego State, which retained its top ranking Wednesday when the 35-member United Press International board of coaches cast 29 first place ballots for the Aztecs, has two games remaining. North Dakota State's only hopes to surpass the Aztecs now lie with Tennessee State, which faces San Diego State Saturday, and major college Utah State, the Aztecs' opponent the following week.

New Mexico Highlands, also finished with a 9-0 mark, took third with Chattanooga moving up to fourth and Texas A&I capturing fifth. Morgan State

was sixth, followed by Tampa, which dropped to seventh after being upset by Southern Illinois.

The United Press

International top 10 small college football teams with first place votes and won-lost-tied records in parentheses. (Ninth week).



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4. Chattanooga (8-1)	235
5. Tex. A&I (8-1)	159
6. Morgan St. (7-1)	105
7. Tampa (7-2)	102
8. W.Ky. (7-1-1)	51
9. x-Troy St. (9-1)	41
10. x-Adams St. (8-1)	40

Second 10-11. Eastern Kentucky (36); 12. Humboldt State (35); 13. Indiana (Pa.) State (34); 14. Willamette (33); 15. Weber State (30); 16. Arkansas State Univ. (25); 17. North Carolina A&T (22); 18. Tie, Kings Point and Florida A&M (14); 20. Delaware (20).

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