

# My Wrestling Journey



*The travels of Our Man from Down Under*

# John Shelvey

## Part 17: The Jokes On Me

I am a big fan of Ron Historyo and of all the work he carries out and then kindly shares with us all and I'm always dipping in to his poster archive. However it was in Terry Hunt's gallery that I stumbled over a poster of the last but one, live wrestling event I attended, which spurred me on to search for and find the very last one I witnessed before emigrating Down Under and it was Ron who came up trumps!



Thanks to Chris  
at the wonderful

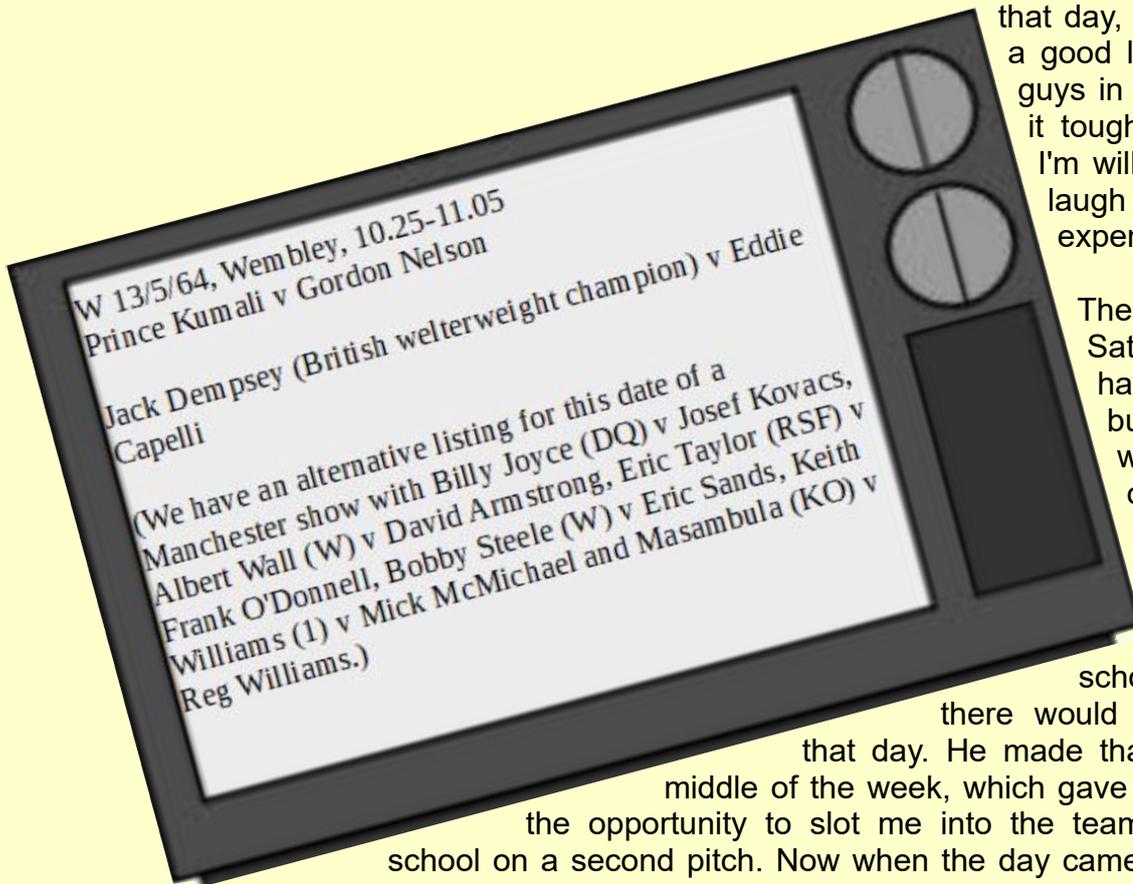
[itvwrestling.co.uk](http://itvwrestling.co.uk)

For saving these gems for us all to enjoy.

Recalling this pivotal period in my life, reminded myself of the last couple of Saturday t.v. wrestling I watched before leaving England's 'Green and Pleasant'.

As the live wrestling events were also on a Saturday, the recall of those events at that time sparked a memory of my two last Saturday mornings before the trip, spent on the Hazelwick school playing fields. The second of those days, was

arguably the worst in my young life up to then, however if I had witnessed what transpired on that day, I would have had a good laugh and as you guys in the UK are doing it tough at the moment, I'm willing to give you a laugh (hopefully) at my expense!



The first of the Saturdays, I was to have played football but after a solid weeks rain falling on a pitch that had been used constantly for nearly eight months, the school caretaker said

there would be no game on that day. He made that decision in the middle of the week, which gave the Rugby coach the opportunity to slot me into the team playing at my school on a second pitch. Now when the day came, that pitch aided by bitterly cold weather and a hard frost, was like concrete and in normal circumstances the game would have been called off, however this game was not just another game. Our opponents were the touring Welsh Schoolboy Champions, the emerging players of the country that lived and breathed rugby. Ours was just another schoolboy team, that won some and lost just as many, so I would imagine our coach probably had connections with the organisers of the tour, or perhaps other schools were not too keen to play these Welsh wizards! There was a noticeable difference in the physical look of the two teams as they took the field. Our team consisted of fifteen lads of varying shapes and sizes, whereas the Welsh Boyos looked like slightly smaller versions of their adult team, so it will come as no surprise to you, dear readers, to learn that we got a bit of a licking that day. I think our only score came when my mate Iain Ryrie picked up a loose ball just inside our half and shot off like a rocket downfield. I ran with him for about thirty yards but gave up when it became apparent that with no opposition in front of him he could plainly see that he was going to be to score and was definitely NOT going to give me the ball and the glory of scoring. (I think I accused him of hogging the ball to himself because I'd beaten him in the two hundred yards race, in the school games). The final whistle was blown not long after that try and as we walked off, a well beaten side, I glanced down and was surprised to see the toe of my kicking boot was hanging off the end of the boot by a few stitched threads and there was blood on my exposed sock. On inspection in the changing room, the foot was okay, but I realised I had another problem and that was, I was now without boots for my last ever football game on the next Saturday morning. The problem as I saw it, was that I could hardly ask my mum to pay for a new pair of boots, as she and my dad had sold just about everything to scrape up enough money to see them through uncertain early times in Australia and I didn't know if I would even play again, especially as I had already planned to give up school once I had left the UK. It didn't occur to me that the toe of the boot might have been able to be stitched back on, however I came up with a simple solution, I'd just borrow a pair of boots, easy peasy!

S 9/5/64, Bolton, 3.40-5.14  
Gwynn Davies v Georges Gordienko (W)  
Colin Joynson (1) v Bobby Steele (1)  
Johnny Czeslaw v Ernie Riley (W)  
Alf Cadman v Leon Arras (replaced by Cadman (RSF) v  
Vic Stewart

(The above was the billing in the TV Times. However other records show the broadcast as coming from Trowell and featuring Bert Royal v Chic Purvey; Vic Faulkner v Sid Cooper, Billy Howes v Norman Walsh and Ted Hannon v Larry Doncaster). We also have an alternative listing for Bolton that doesn't mention TV with a line-up of Roy Bull Davis (W) v Joe Cornelius, Joe Critchley (W) v Al Brown, Josef Zaranoff (W) v Terry O'Neill and Royal/Faulkner (W) v Black Diamonds.

Monday at school and I had the whole week to procure a pair of booties. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday came and went and I still hadn't borrowed a pair, I hadn't even asked any of my mates for a loan and I have no idea why, except that I just thought it would all turn out alright.

Saturday morning of the match and now I had another plan with a back up if needed.

Firstly, when I got to the ground I looked around in the hope that there would be at least twelve of us there with kit, but in those days of no substitutes, only the team of eleven had turned up, so plan 'b' it would have to be. There was a wire cage just outside the dressing sheds, where after school games you could store your footwear for the next time you needed them and also it meant you didn't have to walk around the school with muddy boots or kit so there was bound to be some boots there. Well when I got there, the cage was bare, apart from one pair of cream coloured plimsoles, you may remember them, they were your standard P.E. footwear, white or cream, canvas top, slightly ribbed plastic bottoms, fine for the gym, hard courts or asphalt. Unfortunately for me, the pitch was bare of grass, just slick, wet toffee looking, hard mud.

The whistle to start the match, blew and the next eighty minutes of my life was a nightmare, as like Frank Spencer on ice skates, I slid, slipped and fell, just turning in a different direction was impossible without falling over, trying to kick the ball was fraught with danger as I'd lift my kicking foot and my other would shoot from under me. I should have just walked off and sat out the match, but I persevered,

W 13/5/64, Wembley, 10.25-11.05  
Prince Kumali v Gordon Nelson

Jack Dempsey (British welterweight champion) v Eddie Capelli

(We have an alternative listing for this date of a Manchester show with Billy Joyce (DQ) v Josef Kovacs, Albert Wall (W) v David Armstrong, Eric Taylor (RSF) v Frank O'Donnell, Bobby Steele (W) v Eric Sands, Keith Williams (1) v Mick McMichael and Masambula (KO) v Reg Williams.)

thinking that eventually I'd conquer the 'toffee', also keeping me going, was that I could see the opposition were pretty ordinary and I could feel a couple of goals or even a hat-trick was very possible, if only I could just, and then, 'whoops' down I went again and as the worn ridges of the plimsoles blocked up with mud I started to aquaplane across the pitch. If in the first half I had been tobogganing (without knowing what a tobogg was) in the second half I tumbled like a member of the Nitwits comedy group, tumbling and slithering in the mud (all those break falls I'd endured at the Three Bridges amateur wrestling club were a godsend). Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin, Charlie Drake, when it came to prat-falls, I was in that company. When the whistle sounded to end the match, I was covered in mud from head to foot, more than the other twenty one players combined, I was also tired, bruised and properly fed-up! Strangely enough, none of my team mates seem to notice my eighty minute nightmare, no one commented on my wallowing in the mud for the duration of the game, no one asked why I had worn or was wearing plimsoles and during the game none of the opposing team had commented or laughed at my predicament. As I mentioned earlier, I'm sure had I witnessed that performance by someone else, I would have thought it great fun and even now can imagine it popping up on a 'funniest home video' show, with appropriate prat fall music added.

However, I don't think the owner of the mud cloaked plimsoles laughed when he next laid eyes on them!

\*\*\* Once in a while I've wondered if any of those Welsh boys advanced to club or even international standard and I have reached out to a friend who played in that match (now retired in glorious Vancouver Island) for more information. I have researched the period between 1970 and 1980 when our opponents would have been in their peak playing years and have found, that that decade was a great one for Welsh rugby and many of those players were household names to those who followed the game.

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