

GREG “THE HAMMER” VALENTINE

Inducted by Terry Funk

At the age of 19, Greg “The Hammer” Valentine (Jonathan Wisniski) was put on a Calgary-bound plane by his father, esteemed pro wrestler Johnny Valentine. Greg had become fascinated with the world of pro wrestling after traveling around with his father throughout Texas and decided that he didn’t want to return to college. Dad sent his son to Stu Hart.

Valentine trained at the Hart Dungeon for a little less than a year and his first match was in Calgary against Angelo Mosca. He was bowled over in under five minutes. Valentine credits Hart with giving him the skills to evolve into a main event caliber wrestler. “I am proud to say to everybody that I came from Stu Hart’s Dungeon because it’s like the boot camp of wrestling.

From the frigid cold of Calgary, The Hammer went on to Detroit to be further educated by The Sheik (Ed Farhat). Teaming with Don Fargo as his partner, Greg became Johnny Fargo.

Though starting to make a name for himself, Valentine still couldn’t as of yet climb out from under his father’s shadow. There was pressure living up to the Valentine name. “When you’re the son of a famous person they expect a whole lot out of you or they say you’re trying to be like your father. Even if you are as good, they still don’t want to look at it that way.”

In the Carolinas, he came into his own, using the Valentine name, and teaming with Ric Flair, who also was mentored by Johnny Valentine. He also feuded with Wahoo McDaniel over the Mid-Atlantic title belt, and held the U.S. title. He freelanced around the country, including challenging WWF World champion Bob Backlund.

Valentine’s biggest fame came in September 1984, when he ripped the Intercontinental title from the waist of Tito Santana by snapping his knee in the figure four leg lock in London, Ontario. The angle would go down in history books as the start of a bloody, bitter and entertaining feud.

Valentine played a major role in the WWF’s wrestling revival in the 1980s as a singles grappler and then as a WWF tag team champion with Brutus Beefcake. Managed by the colorful Johnny Valiant, The Dream

Team injected a new-found excitement into the tag team scene. They were brash. They were bold. But, underneath the pomp and circumstance were two exceptional grapplers. Their matches against The British Bulldogs are classics in the pro wrestling archives.

As well, Valentine joined forces for a short while with Dino Bravo as the “New Dream Team” but the chemistry just wasn’t the same. He then dyed his hair black and paired with the Honky Tonk Man as Rhythm And Blues. The Elvis inspired team was managed by Jimmy Hart. A promised tag team title reign never came about and Valentine was signed to wrestle in Japan. Unhappy with the situation, he quit the company, but not pro wrestling. Now in his 60s, Valentine will still suit up and compete in the ring.

— John Powell