

## **Luther Lindsay**

**Luther Jacob Goodall** (December 30, 1924 – February 21, 1972) was an American professional football player and wrestler, known by his ring name **Luther Lindsay** or **Lindsey**, who competed throughout the United States with the National Wrestling Alliance as well as international promotions such as All Japan Pro Wrestling, Joint Promotions and Stampede Wrestling.

One of the first African American wrestlers to become a major star, he was extremely popular in the Pacific Northwest and Mid-Atlantic territory. A frequent rival and tag team partner of Shag Thomas, he also teamed with Bearcat Wright, Nick Bockwinkel, Pepper Gomez and was involved in feuds with "Iron" Mike DiBiase, Mad Dog Vachon, Beauregarde, Moondog Mayne, Tony Borne and Pat Patterson & The Hangman. For much of the early 1950s and '60s, Lindsay was billed as the U.S. Colored (or Negro) Heavyweight Champion and took part in the first interracial professional wrestling matches held in the United States.

Between 1953 and 1956, he faced NWA World Heavyweight Champion Lou Thesz in a series of matches. Although largely resulting in time limit draws, he was the first African-American to make a challenge to the title and earned Thesz's respect during these bouts publicly praising his wrestling ability.

He was considered one of the top submission wrestlers of his day working with Don Leo Jonathan and Stu Hart. Lindsay was one of the few men who bested him in the infamous "Hart Dungeon" and later became one of Hart's best friends. Hart reportedly carried a picture of him in his wallet until his death. He was held in high regard by his fellow wrestlers such as Lou Thesz, J.J. Dillon, Rip Hawk and Les Thatcher.

As early as 1953, Lindsay was billed as the U.S. Colored or Negro Heavyweight Champion. He was one of the few African-Americans in professional wrestling and, in accordance with state segregation laws at the time, he was only allowed to travel with and compete against other African-American wrestlers during his early career. One of his most frequent opponents was Shag Thomas who he later claimed knew better than any other opponent. During the late 1950s, he became the first African-American south of Washington, D.C. to compete in a wrestling event when he faced Ron Wright in Kingsport, Tennessee. Although the National Guard was brought in amid fears of rioting, the crowd unexpectedly favored Lindsay against Wright. As a result of Lindsay's success in the area, other African-American wrestlers were also brought into the area such as Bearcat Wright and Bobcat Brown. Lindsay was brought to Texas by promoter Morris Sigel. As the state began complying with national de-segregation laws, Sigel promoted the first interracial wrestling match in the state pitting Lindsay against Duke Keomuka in one of the biggest matches of the year. Lindsay would also face Lou Thesz in Dallas on September 20, 1955 in yet another draw.

In January 1956, he entered the Dallas-Fort Worth area then promoted by Ed McLemore. On January 10, he faced Duke Keomuka in a best 2-of-3 falls match at The Sportatorium. Although taking the first pin fall, Keomuka pinned Lindsay with the help of outside interference by Tiny Mills. When referee Roy Carter was knocked unconscious outside the ring, wrestler Danny McShain made the count after Lindsay pinned Keomuka. Although controversial, the third fall was granted to Lindsay by referee decision. In late 1957, Lindsay wrestled for promoter Pedro Martinez in Fort Erie, Ontario. Fighting to a draw with Wally Greb on September 21, Lindsay defeated Wild Bill Austin that same day in Buffalo. He later fought to draws with Joe Blanchard and Tiger Tasker. On December 17, he lost to NWA World Heavyweight Champion Dick Hutton in Dallas.

In early-1959, he appeared in the Capitol Wrestling Corporation for Vince McMahon, Sr. and Toots Mondt where he faced Chris Tolos, Emile Duprée and Hard Boiled Haggerty. From the early 1960s till his death, Lindsay appeared throughout the NWA territories.

Lindsay scored a string of victories the following spring of 1971, defeating Art Nelson, Bill Bowman, Bobby Paul, Frank Morrell and Johnny Heidman within a six-week period. Despite losing a rematch to Frank Morrell in Charleston, South Carolina on February 11, he and Frank Hester defeated Joe Soto and Tony Romano in Raleigh, North Carolina the following week. On the night of February 21, 1972, Lindsay was facing local wrestler Bobby Paul at Park Center in Charlotte. After only ten minutes into the match, Lindsay pinned his opponent with a diving belly-flop. He apparently suffered a fatal heart attack when he made the pin and died on top of his opponent.

When Lindsay did not respond to the referee after scoring the pinfall, the police were called. Lindsay was taken back to the dressing room where he was declared dead shortly thereafter. His body was kept at his old alma

mater, Hampton Institute, for a week before his burial. His funeral was attended by several well-known wrestlers including Les Thatcher who was one of the pallbearers.

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