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While I've been trying to convince Impact Wrestling to make me the first announcer to take the Gut Check Challenge, one of my video ideas was to use my old wrestling action figures to demonstrate how to call the moves.Since I've been watching wrestling since the mid-80s, I've noticed that some moves aren't called the same as they used to. Other moves are being called by names that make no sense.Still other moves haven't been called anything at all, so I've invented a few new moves names that I've used while calling the action for Ring of Honor, International Wrestling Cartel, Chikara and many other promotions.I'm not criticizing my fellow wrestling announcers; most are doing a fine job and are repeating mistakes they've heard from past commentators. Now it's time to set things right.Moves that are called wrongRussian Leg Sweep: As seen in Video 1, this classic move was popularized by Bret Hart and Brad Armstrong. Yet somehow, this move started being called a "Side Russian Leg Sweep."That would be fine if there was another kind of Russian Leg Sweep, but there's not. So there's no need to say "Side," it's just a Russian Leg Sweep.Schoolboy: When you roll up your opponent from behind, it's a rollup, not a schoolboy. Somehow, announcers started confusing a simple rollup with the schoolboy crank (Video 2) which you show someone who goes tumbling over your buddy, who is crouched behind him.Sidewalk Slam or Spinebuster? As seen in Video 2, a Spinebuster sees the victim land in front of the attacker, while a Sidewalk Slam sees the victim dropped on the side (Kudos to Big Boss Man for performing in the video with a broken arm; he just Scotch-taped it and kept going).Moves that are pronounced wrongEnzuigiri: Life was simpler in the 80s, when Bad News Brown said "It's Ghetto Blaster time, fool!" before delivering a flying kick toward the back of Hulk Hogan's head.Sadly, he's no longer with us, so the move is now called by its Japanese name, the enzuigiri. However, some announcers pronounce it an "en-za-GURRY."Watch Video 2, where a spelling expert shows us the correct spelling, and you'll know this move is pronounced "en-zoo-GEERY." Huracanrana: This vertical headscissors is another move where the spelling and pronunciation is all over the map. Some announcers call it a "Hurra-ca-rana" while others pronounce it "Hurren-con-rra."Keep in mind that this move was invented by a Mexican wrestler named Huracan Ramirez. Just add "rra" to his first name, and you've got yourself a "Huracan-Rana."Moves that are not called by precise namesAn Inverted Atomic Drop is a very common call for many announcers, but that move has its own name: it's a Manhattan Drop.How about a headscissors that is delivered by a wrestler who spins all the way around his opponent? That's a Satellite Headscissors, because the attacker is "orbiting" the victim.Moves that are not called anything at all had to invent a name for the heel tag-team/trick of clapping hands behind the referee's back to make it sound like a legal tag has taken place. That's called a Phantom Audio Tag (see Video 1).How about when a wrestler throws a dropkick at an opponent who is coming at him from the top rope? I've dubbed that a Defensive Dropkick.We're not going to cop out by calling everything a suicide dive. It's really not that hard. Let's start with a dive off the top rope all the way to the floor. That's a Plancha.How about when you grab the top rope and catapult out of the ring onto your opponent? That's a Pescado.A running dive through the ropes is a Tope. Over the top? It's a Tope Suicida. Over the top with a flip? That's a Tope Con Hilo.I can hear you asking, "But Jeff, what about a round-off into a blind backflip over the top rope without touching anything?"Of course, timing is everything. When you see a move like this, let the crowd's reaction tell the story. You'll have time to tell the audience the name of the move while the wrestlers are scraping themselves off the floor.Instead, there's a lot more to being a great wrestling announcer than learning the names of the moves. If you aspire to announce for WWE someday, you need to brush up on your storytelling skills. They care more about connecting the audience with the characters and stories than calling the names of the moves.In Part 2 of this series, we will examine what separates a good announcer from a great announcer. Because if wrestling announcing is art, do you want to be a house painter or Picasso?@jeffDorman is the only announcer to work for one of the top three pro wrestling companies and also to call a live, global MMA pay-per-view. E-mail him at jeff@mmaspecialist.com. Michael Cole (art credit Grant Gould (c) PWTorch) **SPOTLIGHTED PODCAST ALERT (YOUR ARTICLE BEGINS A FEW INCHES DOWN)**... The role of the announcer is without doubt the most under-appreciated role in wrestling. They're not just a big part of the show, they ARE the show. Virtually every segment they're a part of. There's no getting away from them. That's why I feel that WWE's current announce teams deserve a lot more of the blame than they get for the decline in popularity of the current product. They're pretty much unbearable the vast majority of the time. You'll always have wrestlers that you as a viewer can't stand watching but it's just one segment on a show, you can live with it because there's enough other stuff that you do enjoy. With the announce team however, there's no getting away from that. So what makes a good announcer? That's what we're going to dive into in this latest edition of Five Count. I'm going to look at traits such as credibility, trust, timing and selflessness and how they contribute to an effective announcer as well as drawing on examples of announcers such as Jim Ross, Lance Russell and Gordon Solie who had this announcing shtick pretty well figured out along with looking at why so many of the modern day announcers struggle to recreate their magic. (1) You're Essentially A Salesman A lot of people may think that the most important requirement for a good announcer is the ability to be knowledgeable about the product that you're calling and to be great at calling matches. Obviously, they're massively important but the most important requirement is the ability to sell the newer wrestling something. The announcer is the equivalent of a salesman. You're job is to speak to your audience and get them to spend money with you. If you can't do that effectively, then all the knowledge in the world really doesn't count for anything. A major part of being a good salesman is building trust. Your audience has to trust what you're telling them is the truth. You need to have credibility and believability to get the viewer to trust what you say. Without those you're just not going to be a good announcer. If you look at any good announcer throughout the history of wrestling, they've all had those traits. If Lance Russell told you something then you trusted every single word that he said. Lance would never lie to me! If Gordon Solie told you that something was important then you believed him. If JR told you that business was about to pick up then you knew that something a little extra was about to happen because he had the credibility not to oversell something. Compare that holy trilogy of announcers to your modern day WWE announcers (yes I know the people producing them are as much if not more to blame). If JBL or Byron Saxton try to start giving you a history lesson you don't trust them because you know that they're spewing a false reality. We know that Stephanie McMahon didn't start the Women's Revolution. They're the bad type of salesman who try to sell you on your dream home being flawless despite the fact that you can see all the glaring flaws right in front of your eyes. Once they start telling you something that you know isn't true then the trust is gone and the ability for them to sell you anything is severely dented. For instance, when WWE had Cole, Graves and Booker go into overdrive telling everyone that John Cena is the greatest of all the time, a large chunk of the audience will be sat there thinking "No he isn't. He's one of but not THE greatest". Or the constant we listen to the fans line. No you don't. You don't need to be anti-authority by being honest to a brutal degree but sometimes in order to be a good announcer that the audience trusts, you need to look at some of the lines that you're fed and either not say them at all or spin them in such a way that you do your job while also not telling blatant lies. One of Michael Cole's biggest problems is that he doesn't have any credibility. He doesn't have any credibility because he always had where if he turns his sales pitch up to a higher level you sit up and take notice. When Michael Cole does the same you sit up and take notice. A big part of this is on WWE management for getting to deliver content that we really want to see. When Michael Cole was on the big pitch that Roman Reigns is in trouble, you as a viewer struggle to buy into the stakes suddenly being greater. Whenever JR would do his big sell at the top of his voice call it was always then something big was happening. He would start busting out his GOOD GOD ALMIGHTY call for something like Braun Strowman slamming Roman Reigns into the wall. He knew when to pick his spots and because we as viewers knew that, we knew that he was credible enough that when he did go for his big calls that it was time for us to take notice of what was happening. This is the same reason why a heel play-by-play announcer is never a good idea. When you're trying to sell someone on something you try to be likeable. Even young children understand the basic concept that if you want something from someone you suck up to them and pretend that you're being nice to them beforehand. If someone you work with is constantly a jerk to you and then one day they ask you to lend them some money you're not likely to lend them the money are you? Contrast that with if someone at work who you really like asks you the same question then you probably will lend them the money. If you're Michael Cole or Josh Matthews and you're spending the entire show being obnoxious and annoying and trying to get people to not like you, how on earth do you expect to be able to turn around and sell them same people on the upcoming show that you're tasked with promoting? It just isn't going to happen. An announcer is a salesman. To be a good salesman, the buyer has to trust that you have their best interests at heart and that you're not going to spin them a false reality. Announcers are selling events. Their job is to get you to see the upcoming show that they're tasked with promoting. If viewers don't trust them and don't believe in what they say, how are they going to convince you to buy something? (2) Be A Man Of The People Building on from the previous lesson, any good announcer also needs to be likeable. And that's not a trait that is easy to come by. Not everyone is naturally likeable, no matter how hard they try. Again, let's take all of the great announcers that they were all the type of guy that you would want them walking down the aisle with you. Frank Bonenna in Portland was the greatest announcer ever but he was so effective in that role because his personality was so naturally likeable. He might get something wrong and a minute later he'd realize and be all apologetic and everyone watching would just be like "ah it's you Frank, don't worry about it". Or he'd cut one of his many plugs for the local sponsors of the show and they'd just make you smile in the loveable old Granddad way that he'd do it. And he could use that to get every aspect of the show over. If Frank told everyone that Roddy Piper was now one of them by god if Frank likes him then that's good enough for me. If Tom Phillips tells you that Charlotte is someone that you should like then you don't take any notice of him. He's not one of us. He's a corporate stooge in a suit representing the organisation. He isn't telling us what we think, he's telling us what they want us to think. It sounds like I'm ragging all over Phillips here but I actually think he's good in the role in a quietly effective and inoffensive way. He'll never be a great announcer though because he'll never have that ability to be one of us and to be that voice of the people. He'll forever be the voice of WWE management. The announcer should be the viewer's mouthpiece on the show. They should know what we're thinking. They should be able to get inside our minds and know what buttons to push to sell us on what they're selling. The only way that an announcer can do that is if they are one of us. And that will change from one promotion to the next. Excallibur is a great fit as the voice of the people in PWG but he'd be awful in that role for WWE's audience. Frank Bonenna in Portland was a perfect fit but for a national promotion he wouldn't have worked. It's all about fit. It's a natural ability embodied in your personality. If you can't be a man of the people then you're going to struggle. (3) You Have To Command Respect If you don't have the respect of the viewer then how do you expect to be able to sell them on anything? How do you expect them to take any notice of you? There's a reason the lead announcer is always a babyface and why heel play-by-play announcers don't work. It's the same reason why the big go home promo to sell a big match was always traditionally done by the babyface. The people that you respect are the people that you listen to and take notice of. Back when you were in school, you'd have some teachers that you liked and some that you didn't. I bet everyone reading this behaved better and worked harder in the classes where they had a teacher that they liked than when they had one that they didn't like. Once people like you, you can use that to make them do things. That sounds a lot more sinister than I meant it! If people like and respect you as an announcer then you have their ear. They're not just listening to you but they're taking notice of you. Whenever JR would say that business is about to pick up, it picked up. If he sold a match as a slobberknocker that you're not going to want to miss then it became can't miss. If Michael Cole gives you the big "the ring will look like a war zone" sell then you're not taking any notice of him because you know it's just a corporate shell line. A huge part of the ability to command respect is being backed up by the booking. Tom Phillips could be the second coming of Lance Russell and it just wouldn't work if he was being undermined by the product that he's tasked with promoting. He can be great at getting the key character traits of the babyface over but if the promotion then undercuts the babyface by beating them repeatedly or scripting them to say things that undermine their personality then it undoes all of that work. You look at every great announcer with a memorable legacy and they all have a great product in front of them. Jim Ross in Mid South and then WCW and then WWF was always calling a good product. Compare Ross calling the matches he's done for NXT to how he sounded on the World of Sport special or to a lesser degree on the Mae Young Classic. It's the same guy in the same era but everything works so much better with a strong product in front of them. Compare Lance Russell and Gordon Solie in their primes to when they went to WCW and were calling C-Show level TV matches. I've already talked about how many of the key traits of a great announcer are virtually impossible to teach. They're a part of who you are. Respect is much more open to outside factors. A massive part of an announcer being able to command respect is the wrestlers themselves showing them respect. If they don't respect the announcer then it's pretty unlikely that we will too. If you look at each of the holy trilogy then you can strongly attach them with lead babyface during their peak runs. Jerry Lawler with Lance Russell in Memphis, Dusty Rhodes with Gordon Solie in Florida and Steve Austin with Jim Ross in the WWF. That's not a coincidence. If JR was Stone Cold's best buddy then he's my buddy too. Even when Lawler was a heel there was always that undisputable admiration for Lance that would become before he'd take the Mick out of Lance's nose and laugh at himself for it. One of the best angles ever involving an announcer was Roddy Piper's babyface turn in Georgia. He originally came into the territory as a heel co-hosting the show with Gordon Solie but he wasn't a beat the viewer of the head that he had a guy heel. He'd play his role straight up and not act like it was beneath him. Roddy Piper was hosting the show with Gordon Solie and in Piper's mind he was going to be the best host there ever was. He was there to play by the rules but every now and again he'd steer off course a little when he was interviewing Bob Armstrong or whenever Gary Hart would show up and they'd have their over the top mutual love in. Within all of that though, the respect that Piper had for Solie was never in doubt. He might not like most of the babyface wrestlers and he might disagree with Gordon a lot when he'd be pro-babyfaces but you could always tell that Piper respected the job that Solie did. Respect can be contagious. If everyone on the show has respect for what Solie is saying then you feel compelled to show the same respect yourself. When you establish norms in wrestling, you're not just conditioning viewers to expect certain things to happen, you're also creating the potential for something to really get over in the rare instance when you do go against the norm. Nobody ever put their hands on Gordon Solie. So when Don Muraco comes in and starts pushing him about it means something. And that's what made the babyface turn with Piper come off so well. We as viewers respected Gordon Solie and when someone starts disrespecting someone that we respect, we're appalled, they're clamouring for someone to step in and stand up for our guy and when you create that easy angle to get a babyface over. If you have a promotion where you're not respecting the announcer then you can't build up any equity to then cash in on the rare occasion when someone does disrespect them and the babyface has to run in to stand up for them. It's not just signs of disrespect, it's also signs of disrespect. The moment that you start disrespecting the announcer, even as a heel, you start diminishing their ability to be effective in their role. If they start getting pushed around then they start looking like weak pushovers and nobody respects a pushover. If you have the wrestlers constantly berating them and they're not allowed to fire back then they look timid and that's not something that commands respect either. If we don't respect the announcer then we're not going to pay attention to what they say which means they're fighting a losing battle when they try to sell us on whatever they're trying to promote. (4) Tone & Timing Are Crucial Now these two traits aren't part of one's organic personality and are something that can be learned and developed. You've got to have the right tone, or more accurately the ability to change your tone at the right moments. Which also plays into the timing aspect. Sometimes you've got to know when to let the moment speak for itself, MICHAEL. Much like how wrestlers need to have the ability to turn their performance either up or down depending on their role on a card, a good announcer also needs to have the same ability. An undercard match shouldn't be called the same as a main event and a comedy match shouldn't be called the same as a spotfest. Part of the reason why I'd personally put Gordon Solie on a level just below Lance Russell and Jim Ross is that he could be somewhat one dimensional. That dimension was perfect for the product he was calling but in the rare moments where he did find himself outside of his comfort zone he wasn't the best at adapting and excelling in less familiar environments. It's the same reason why I don't think Mauro Ranallo is a great announcer. If you hear him call an epic main event match in isolation then he is pretty great but over the course of a two to three hour show the effect soon wears off because he calls everything the same. Even someone starts disrespecting someone that we respect, we're appalled, they're clamouring for someone to step in and stand up for our guy and when you create that easy angle to get a babyface over. 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