

AEW Dynamite 12/30: RIP Jon Huber (Brodie Lee/Luke Harper)



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Photo Credit: Jon Huber

When you become a wrestling fan, the men and women who perform and built their bodies on the line become gladiator avatars. It's the good guys versus the bad guys. We cheer hard for them to win and overcome the odds. We also jeer just as hard for them to lose sometimes. That inner child that holds on to that sense of wonder stays with you. These people become the characters they portray and there's insulation to the outside limiting factors of life. Surely the heroes that I see every week can't die or get sick. They will overcome it just like a hot tag to a babyface wrestling in a tag match.

The first time I experienced loss as a wrestling fan was with Eddie Guerrero. When I heard the announcement, I couldn't believe it. Do you mean the guy who I used to watch in WCW that would tear things up with Rey Mysterio Jr. and Dean Malenko? Latino Heat is gone? The guy who got his just due winning the WWE Title at No Way Out 2004? I was hoping that it wasn't real. That he was just playing with us when he would get guys disqualified. Then I saw the tribute speeches and the fourth wall came down. These men and women have families that they often leave for 200–300 days out of the year just to entertain us. But in a business where you saw a character like The Undertaker literally cheat death, it was hard to see your hero not conquer what is an almost certain fate we will all meet.

When he came into AEW and became 'The Exhaulted One,' Brodie Lee took a stable that was a little down and helped elevate it. He did this with The Wyatt's in NXT/WWE. You can say that wherever he went, that place was then better for it. He was having one of the best years of his singles career. A TNT champion. His last match was a brunt affair with Cody in a dog collar match. The sense of power that he showed in his match with Eddie Kingston in CHIKARA was the one he ended his career with. When he wrestled, you were in awe of how well he moved for his size. Watch the ladder match he had with Dolph Ziggler in 2014 at TLC or the Elimination Chamber match he had with Randy Orton in 2016. Brodie Lee/Luke Harper both put his all in doing his best, plus making you look good as well.

In a year when we've had #SpeakingOut and so many stories of how the wrestling business can turn bad, it was beautiful to see so many positive things said about Jon Huber. So many messages on how he reached out to people to help them through their hard times. Others on how he helped in the wrestling ring. Just an all-around great guy. With the holiday season as hard as it is, a wife and children lost their husband/father. Unfortunately, the Christmas season is going to be an emotional earmark for them for years to come.

It's hard to lose someone like Jon Huber. Not only has this year been so saturated with loss, but we can also really use more people like him with his heart around. Wrestling fans tend to take sides with this Wednesday Night War, but Jon Huber the man received praise from all different federations. He made his mark in the eyes of wrestling fans and the hearts of everybody he interacted with. WWE wrestlers watched the extremely well done AEW tribute show because, in the end, we're all a big crazy family. To see Brodie Lee Jr. wear that TNT title with his dad's boots in the ring, was heartbreaking, but it also gives you hope for the future. We only hope to make the world a little easier for our children as they get older, and you can say that Brodie did this for his children undoubtedly.

We may argue about win/loss records, creative directions of characters, or what federation is better. At the end of the day, we are all people trying to enjoy the commonality of a shared community. Many wrestlers switch companies, alliances, etc, but the stories and pictures bridge these gaps. They show that your impact and grace can extend beyond companies with three-letter abbreviations. I hope that in 2021 we can be a bit like Jon Huber, look at each other and do the same thing.

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