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The Taxman Cometh

Again

In anticipation of the April 15th tax deadline, *WWE Magazine* audits our favorite bureaucrat, Mike Rotunda, aka Irwin R. Schyster. The bean counter finally comes clean about wrestling in a shirt and tie, tagging with The Million Dollar Man, and spotting a tax cheat.

 **There's something that's been bugging us for years: What does the "R" in Irwin R. Schyster stand for?**

Let me think here for a second...I believe it was Ruben, but I'm not positive. It was so long ago. It may have been mentioned only once or twice. I think it possibly was revealed in *WWE Magazine*. Or maybe it was uttered by Roddy Piper, or somebody at the announce table.

Why did the fans hate I.R.S. so very much?

I think it's pretty common knowledge that no one wants to pay taxes. It was easy for I.R.S. to strike a nerve with people. It didn't help that he went out there during his segments and called all the fans "tax cheats." In his mind, he was motivating the audience into behaving like upstanding citizens. They really didn't like that.

I.R.S. debuted in 1991. Was he motivated by something going on in the U.S. at that time?

In those days, the Internal Revenue Service had a lot of power. It was widely known that if you messed with the I.R.S., you'd get into trouble. They could go into your house and rifle through every piece of financial paper, and then seize your home. That's a pretty scary situation. Since then though, the I.R.S.'s power has shrunk some.

You were billed as hailing from our nation's capital. Have you ever visited the actual Internal Revenue Service building?

No. They would've turned me away at the door. During my travels, though, I occasionally did run into real I.R.S. agents and accountants. It was amazing because they actually liked what I was doing. I said the things they wished they could.

Your choice of ring gear—slacks, a button-down shirt, a tie and suspenders—must have put you at a decided disadvantage. Were there any difficulties wearing that get-up in the ring?

No, originally they designed an outfit that was more like wearing tights. The pants I had tailored instead were actually more comfortable. In the

summer, it was hot wrestling in the get-up, but in the winter months, when many of the arenas were cooler, it worked out pretty well. The gear was made of really stretchy material. I wore a different shirt for every match and I kept a steady supply at the cleaners. I went through quite a few Stafford shirts. I should have bought stock in that company.

What did you keep in that briefcase?

It depended on the situation. If we were doing something involving cash, I'd hold a lot of money in there—which I always had to return. Otherwise, I'd store my glasses in there.

Did you actually need the glasses?

No. In fact, they really were quite a hindrance because I would buy reading glasses from drug stores, and when I'd wear them, I'd lose focus. Sometimes when I was walking to the ring, I was basically blind.

We don't recall I.R.S. coming to the ring to any entrance music. Wouldn't ring music be an acceptable tax write-off?

I didn't think I needed it back then. At that point, everyone was starting to get ring music, so it was different to not come out to it.

Was there ever any thought of using The Beatles' "Taxman"?

With the residuals that needed to be paid, that idea was shelved pretty quickly.

Do you have an all-time favorite match from your career?

It's hard to say. Earlier on in my career, I had the opportunity to contest some hour-long matches with Ric Flair and Harley Race in the Florida territories. Those were really challenging. That's actually where Barry Windham and I teamed up before we went to WWE

and won the tag titles (as The U.S. Express). That was right before the first *WrestleMania*. Back in those days you would wrestle 30 to 40 minutes a night, especially in tag matches.

Speaking of tag matches, you're a five-time World Tag Team Champion in WWE, twice with The U.S. Express and three times with Ted DiBiase as a part of Money, Inc. Do you have a soft spot for two-on-two matches?

I wrestled a lot of singles matches in my career. But tag teaming is a different animal, so to speak, and I think the matches are totally unique. There's no better drama than a Superstar in trouble trying to tag his partner in.

Why did Money, Inc. work so well together?

The characters fed off of each other—the rich guy with the taxman in his back pocket. At that point in my career, tagging up with Ted, who was a polished performer, we didn't have to talk that much, because we just fed off of each other.

Did The Million Dollar Man ever borrow money from you in a pinch?

I can't divulge that.

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AUDIT THIS!

Irwin R. Schyster's 5 tips for spotting a tax cheat.

- 1. Someone fidgeting.
- 2. Someone who won't look you in the eye.
- 3. Someone sweating.
- 4. Someone stuttering.
- 5. Someone loosening/tightening his tie.

