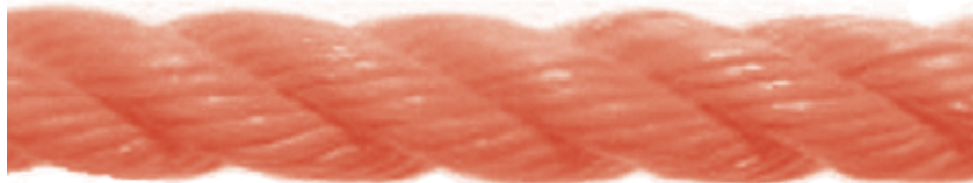




A SPECIFIC BOOK FOR  
FUTURE AND UPCOMING  
PRO WRESTLERS AND PROMOTERS

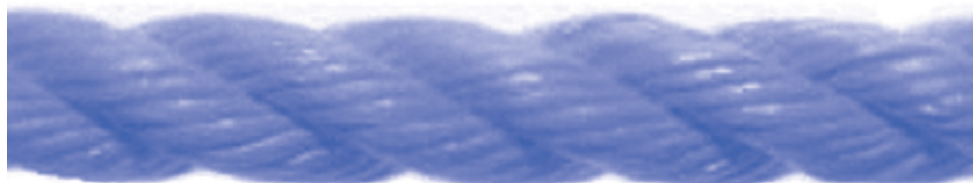
**MAKE THE FIRST STEP  
IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION**



There is a right and wrong way to approach the teaching of Pro Wrestling. In Luca Rusconi's journey into the World of Pro Wrestling, he incurred many trials and tribulations that had occurred along the way. In this book, Mr. Rusconi most important aim is to help the younger generation and resurrect Pro Wrestling from the abuses that is suffering today. Also includes exclusive interviews with Team 3D (Formally known as The Dudley Boyz) and Jim Cornette.



Swiss born, Luca Rusconi is an upcoming Pro Wrestler who has been in the business since 2005, he has been trained in Canada and the USA in some of the World's best Academies. In 2009, he was making a research paper about Pro Wrestling. That was his chance to write about everything that is wrong with the attitude of the people who are going into Pro Wrestling today. He decided to transform his research paper into a small book. Being still part of the new generation himself, he has realized the errors he has made and how this business works. And now he is ready to write about it. Hopefully, thanks to the people who helped him out throughout his career so far, he has now have the opportunity to correct his mistakes, both the ones that were hurting himself and, most importantly, the ones that were hurting the business.



*Nowadays, the new generation of wrestlers and promoters misunderstand the complexity of the Pro Wrestling World, which is being abused to the point of becoming an endangered form of art.*

*Luca Rusconi*

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# Intro

June 2009 – Orlando, FL. At the very last month in the English school in Orlando, while I was training at the Team 3D Academy, I had to write a Research Paper, which is basically an objective research on a particular subject. Of course, I decided to write about Pro Wrestling. But as soon as I started my work, I found out that I wanted more than a simple research. It was my chance to write about everything that is wrong and not going in the right direction in Pro Wrestling today. Everything in Pro Wrestling today makes me angry, like the disrespect and the disgrace that hurt this business today. I decided to transform my research paper into a small book, which I finished months after the school.

I did not want to write just about myself or about the history of Pro Wrestling or about anything else related to that. I had a specific idea. I wanted to write a book for the new generation of wrestlers. Being still part of the new generation myself, I have realized the mistakes I have made and how this business works. And now I am ready to write about it. Hopefully, thanks to the people who helped me out through my Pro Wrestling career so far, I had the opportunity to correct my mistakes, both the ones that were hurting myself and, most importantly, the ones that were hurting the business.

This is the kind of book I would have liked to read and take with me back in 2005, when I started my career. I am not giving lessons on Pro Wrestling in this book, but I am explaining what it is about, what is hurting it, the right and wrong attitude and the pro-

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per approach to it. I want to describe my mistakes and explain them. It is definitely a book covering Pro Wrestling 360°. It took me years to gather the experience I put in this book. My goal is to help the younger generations not to make the same mistakes I made, in order to help them build a career for themselves and, most importantly, to protect Pro Wrestling from the damage that it is suffering today.

I would like to thank everybody who helped me out for this book. A special thank you to **Luca Napolitano**, undergraduate student at the Advanced School of Modern Languages for Interpreters and Translators in Forlì, University of Bologna, for adjusting the English and helping me express my ideas.

**Joe Montalvo**, teacher at the Orlando English Institute. Bachelor in English with a 16-years teaching experience, for helping me develop the research paper and evolve it to a book.

**Bubba Bully Ray & Devon** (TNA Team 3D / WWE's Dudley Boyz), for the interview they released me and for everything they thought me at the Team 3D Academy. A special thank you to Bubba Ray for setting up the interview with Jim Cornette.

**Jim Cornette** (WWE/WCW/TNA/ROH wrestlers managed, booker, commentator, management director, executive producer) for the interview he released me.

**Matt Tanzillo** for helping me with the transcription of the interviews.

**Everybody in the Pro Wrestling World who has helped and is still helping me develop my career.**

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# PRO WRESTLING'S WORLD

## 1.1 What it is about

Pro Wrestling World is very complex to understand, live and accept. The most important thing is respect. It is not a competition, it is not about who is the best, it is a sport-entertainment involving people working together. The first step of having respect for the business is understanding that nobody can become a Legend all by himself. Setting up a good match means having wrestlers working together properly. Setting up a good match also means having skilled wrestlers who respect one another. Setting up a good match mainly means being trained properly and being aware that Pro Wrestling is not a game, it is not a joke and it is not something you can learn to do in a few days. Every time a Pro Wrestler steps into the ring, he represents the art of wrestling, he represents everyone who wrestled before him and everyone who did everything in their power to keep the business alive through the years.

There is no university, text book or wrestling school. Hopefully there are some good wrestling academies, but there is no place where to get “a degree” in Pro Wrestling. That is because Pro Wrestling is an art handed down from a generation to another. Therefore, Pro Wrestling can not be learned completely in a few years’ time, but it is a constantly growing learning process which progresses along with experience and dedication.

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In my interview with him, Bubba Ray (Team 3D) said:  
*“The passing down the knowledge and respect for me is very important in Pro Wrestling because that’s the old school way, that’s is the way guys like Dusty Rhodes and Dick Murdoch, Ric Flair and all the old school wrestlers, you know, all the way back to guys like Bruno Sammartino, Pedro Morales, all of the old school guys, this business is about respect for the guys who came before you. This is a very very good business, very lucrative business, you can make a lot of money in this business but you can only do that if you have respect for and you respect everybody else who came before you, and they’re gonna pass down the knowledge to you about how to really make money in this business and be successful you always to be respectful towards it. This business can make you a millionaire over night, it can also keep you on skid road for 10 years. So that’s way is very important to me to always have respect for the business in general always have respect for my follow workers but most of all have respect for the guys who came before me and all pay the way for me.”*

When a man jumps into the Pro Wrestling World he is going to be part of a big family, like in a ship, where you have to respect everybody, learn from the veteran and help the rookie, help each others and working together for a single purpose or the ship sinks.

The negative aspect of being a family is that sometimes you

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can not speak out and say the truth. Just like a real family, members might come to realize that someone among them is a bad person, but no one would ever say it out loud because it could cause problems inside the family and would only bring animosity and tension. In the Pro Wrestling world, this concept works in a similar way. Expressing your disappointment or your dislike to some other wrestlers can cost you. Take it as a rule: in the Pro Wrestling business, keep your mouth shut, be nice with everybody and help as many people as you can to be successful. I think that, just like in a real family, you might not like somebody but you must learn how to coexist with them. However, in wrestling business, if you do not like somebody's actions, his position determines your reactions. On one hand, it is necessary to help newcomers and rookies. This is the right way to keep the business alive. Helping does not take too much, whether you are a newcomer yourself or a veteran.

On the other hand, if you are dealing with a veteran, you must have a different approach. He probably spent years in the business, and probably the reason he still in the business is because he is good at what he does. On an in-ring performance basis, you must have a very good reason not to like him. In most cases, the reason of your disappointment is a consequence of your inexperience. If he does something that does not look right to you, you need to ask yourself why he does it for starters and then, if you still do not understand, go and ask him very politely "Sir, might I ask you something? I didn't understand why you did what you did." He will probably be happy to help you. By doing this, not only can you

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avoid having a problem with him, but you also learn a lesson. In this business, the veterans gave everything they had to stay at the top and, while doing that, they helped many people. They deserve the respect that they demand. However, as far as their personality outside the ring is concerned, some of them can be rude, may have alcohol or drug problems, they may take advantage of their position. That is when the example of a family structure comes in the play. Everywhere, there always is a mean person, not just in wrestling but also in everyday life: at school, at work, in the family or among friends. However, you must accept them and try to move on. I have always had friends with alcohol problem, different political points of view, with an alternate wrong behavior, but they still are my friends. I am sure somebody do not like my strong personality, but they still love me as a friend and as a wrestler.

## **1.2 Pro Wrestlers and amateur wrestlers**

It is really hard to make a living with wrestling. If wrestling is not the only working activity that someone attends, can a wrestler really consider himself a Pro Wrestler? In my opinion, ability, passion, dedication and, of course, training background are the main skills that turn a man into a Pro Wrestler. Living, breathing, sleeping this business is what a Pro Wrestler is about. Having these characteristics is what makes the difference between a Pro Wrestler and an

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amateur wrestler. I have met a lot of wrestlers in Europe and I have enormous respect for those who take wrestling very seriously and, even if it is not their job, they put everything into it. For them, it is not a hobby, but they live it as their real job. Therefore, whenever I talk about Pro Wrestlers in this book, I also include them. On the other hand, whenever I talk about amateur wrestlers, I am referring to those who take Pro Wrestling not too seriously, have not been trained properly and consider it as a hobby.

In 2005, when I decided to challenge myself by entering the wrestling world, I did not really know what it was about. Back then, I was just a fan who wanted to prove to himself that he could do it. That was my first mistake, because Pro Wrestling is not something that you can just try to do, you have to believe and really want to succeed in doing it. Luckily, I was so fascinated with the Pro Wrestling World that I quickly changed my approach. I had been trained at the “Squared Circle Training” Pro Wrestling Academy in Canada for four months, in 2005, and then I started to wrestle in Italy. That was my second mistake. In fact, I learned a lot in those four months but I also developed a terrible lack in wrestling general knowledge. I started to have matches without the proper knowledge and preparation needed. Thankfully, even if my matches were quite bad, I was able to deal with the people in the ring without risking an injury. However, I have no excuses. I talk about this in the chapter 2.1 Make the first step in the right direction.

When I started wrestling in Italy, I did not know anything about the psychology<sup>1</sup> and all those things required for a good

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1. psychology: in Pro Wrestling means perform the moves and put them together in a way that makes sense, make everything looks real. (see chapter 2.3)

match, but I considered wrestling as a hobby and I felt satisfied. I did not that I was hurting the business. At the “Squared Circle Training”, they did not provide me with a accelerated training just because I only had four months. I had the same schedule that everybody else had. As a good academy, they do not teach people how to put matches together right after four months. They might do it after six or eight months of no less than four-days-a-week training. It also depends on your ability and your frequency in attendance. A wrestling academy considers someone who possesses these qualities a Pro. This is the reason why I was not able to put good matches together yet. Probably, they gave me the chance to go on to the following stages in wrestling learning because I came from abroad and they knew that I had little time to learn as much as I could before returning to my home country. However, right now I think that a Pro Wrestling Academies should not let his students wrestle before they are ready. In other words, if a Pro Wrestling Academy only gave their students the chance to subscribe for at least one year and created the conditions to train Pro Wrestlers and not amateur wrestlers, it would be better for the students themselves, for the business and for the Academy’s sake.

Between 2006 and 2008, I was helping a friend run a small amateur Indy<sup>2</sup>. During those years, I dedicated a lot of time to my passion. Unfortunately, I felt more disappointment than satisfaction. We had our own wrestling training facility where I was trying to teach to the students everything I had learned in Canada. My training technique started slowly, from the bases, the bumps and chain

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2. Indy: independent circuit or indy circuit refers to the many independent promotions which are much smaller than major televised promotions

wrestling. I really did my best. However, the students knew it was just an amateur wrestling training, as we never stole them money or made empty promises. Therefore, they did not take wrestling seriously and, as a result of this, I got frustrated. That was my third mistake. I was wasting my time and my money making my own shows, I was hurting the business with those low quality shows and I was not learning anything. I was in very difficult situation, as a wrestler. I was in the stage between being a Pro Wrestler and an amateur wrestler. That was the worst feeling I have ever had, not only in my wrestling career but probably in my life. Back then, my passion and my dedication were growing so fast I quickly realized it was not at the level I wanted to be. So I decided to walk by the path of becoming a Pro Wrestler.

My hope is that everyone who has the same passion I feel about wrestling took the leap in trying to become a Pro Wrestler, just like I did. While if they do not really believe in it, I hope they will make the best decision and step out of the Wrestling World, because the problem with working with them is sharing your passion with people who are not on your same page. Setting up matches, proposing storylines<sup>3</sup>, talking about business always created a gap between people like them and people like me. In my interview with him, Devon (part of Team 3D) said:

*“I don’t believe wrestling can be an hobby. Wrestling has to be something that you love, that you have a passion for and that you want to be the best you can possibly be. In order to do that, you have to learn the right way of doing*

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3. Storyline: a feud/segment that has been pre-planned by the organiser of the event.

*this. You have to learn the right way to take care a person in the ring, so you don't hurt them. You got to be able to know how to handle your self, inside the ring as a well outside the ring. You need to know how to make smart decisions as well. Some people come to this business seeing what they see in TV and think they can do it. That's where you have the people who are serious about this because they take it as a joke. You pretty much have to want it, you have to really desire it, if you gonna do successful."*

Many people call themselves Pro Wrestlers even without having never been trained in a Pro Wrestling Academy before. I am the first one to admit my mistakes, but I never did anything to embarrass myself, I never did anything ridiculous and I always took good care about others, I never injured nobody. But somebody still does not understand it. They think there are good, they think they do not need any training in a Pro Wrestling Academy.

Devon also said:

*"Those type of people, I think, are disgrace to the business, because that's not what real wrestlers are. Guys who train maybe two months and then they have their first show and to me that's not a real wrestler. A real wrestler is somebody who put time, dedication, and a heart in to being the best. Promoters who just bring in lower wrestlers will give the fans, that come to see them, crappy wrestling."*

# PRO WRESTLING IS AN ENDANGERED ART

## 2.1 Make the first step in the right direction

If a man can not understand and accept what Pro Wrestling is really about, it does not make any sense for him to become a Pro Wrestler. There are enough people in this business hurting it because of their bad attitude. It took me a long time to understand it and finally I had the chance to make up for my mistakes.

Some guys start doing backyard wrestling<sup>4</sup>, which is emulation of Pro Wrestling in gardens or gyms, usually using chairs, ladders, tables and many other tools. Actually, the backyard wrestling I used to practice with my friends was not anything extreme, which means we did not use any object as weapon. We just tried to emulate WWE wrestlers on mats, but it was and it still is wrong, stupid and dangerous. Backyard wrestling only leads to risking serious injuries and does not bring anyone to really appreciate what you do. In 2004, I was already planning to go to a Pro Wrestling Academy in Canada the following year, but I just could not wait. Better idea would be spending my time working out at the gym and making more research about the wrestling business... but I did not. When you step into the Pro Wrestling World, you have to realize that backyard wrestling is something you have to leave behind your back. For some reason,

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4. Backyard wrestling: controversial practice of wrestling as frequently performed by untrained fans in unprofessional surroundings most notably in what spawned its notoriety, a backyard.

when I went to the “Squared Circle Training” in 2005 for my subscription, I gave them a DVD with my backyard videos. Probably, I did that just to show them that I had some good athletic ability and creativity for gimmicks and storylines. When I visited the owner of the Squared Circle Training on July 2009, I told him: “Hey Rob, when I gave you that DVD you should have punched my in the face”. In fact, I risked to put my future career in jeopardy even before stepping in the ring. So, my suggestion is do not give anyone any videos featuring yourself backyard wrestling or anything else. If an individual is athletic, creative or skilled, people will notice he is good at what he does. And I was no exception. In fact, last July, at the Squared Circle Training, a newcomer did exactly the same thing. I urge you never to do it! To be a Pro Wrestler, one has to leave all the amateur nonsense behind. Do not send or post those videos in internet and pray that nobody can find them anywhere. And anyway, if you are thinking about starting with backyard wrestling, forget about it. I do not agree but I can understand people who just want to mess around and have fun and it is better for those people to stay at their houses and keep messing around rather than try to get into the real Wrestling World.

It is important to understand that becoming a wrestler is a very long process. If you want to practice it seriously, you must go to a Pro Wrestling Academy and be really careful where you go. It does not matter how much time you spend researching, do not go to a unreliable Academy because, in addition to wasting money and time, you are going not to be trained properly and it will cost you later in your career. I have met many guys with problems in fixing

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their mistakes. There are thousands of unreliable Academies around the world, in which trainers make people doing series of moves after three training sessions, while these people could not even take a good bump<sup>5</sup>. Trainers also dare to set up these people for matches they are absolutely not ready for: as an example, they can not even chain wrestle. The attitude of the students is even worse. The first day, they already start talking about the gimmick<sup>6</sup> they want to use and they ask for the permission to put their picture on the roster web-page. They want to learn complex moves and high-flying moves instead of starting with the basic ones. And some idiots in some fake Academies allow students to be trained this way. For example, in Italy a fake trainer was teaching power-slams and power-bombs in the second day of training. As a result, two guys injured themselves one of them broke his shoulder in three places. In the USA, many former wrestling superstars have their Academy, but some of them are just stealing other people's money because they are never there supervising the training sessions or they simply do not care. They just want to use their name to make money, filling people with empty promises and stealing their time and money. Given that people do not like working hard and doing log warm-ups and exercises, some of them want to quit right after two weeks. But some Academies lowered the level of physical condition demand in order to keep those people from leaving and keep getting their money. Furthermore, I completely disapprove those promotions that offer public wrestling training sessions for beginners before the show: they charge people for a three-hour training session, which is completely useless because

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5. Bump: In professional wrestling, a bump occurs whenever a wrestler hits the mat or the arena floor after receiving a move from his/her opponent.

se learning Pro Wrestling is a process that takes a long time. These pre-show sessions make Pro Wrestling seem something everybody could do anytime. The truth to the matter is that these promotions are spoiling their own business; in fact, among those people who get trained in those pre-show sessions, there are the people who will someday be poorly wrestling while stating that they have been trained properly, having horrible matches and hurting the business. In my interview with him, Devon (part of Team 3D) said:

*“I think that Pro Wrestling is a lost art, now. Because of people not knowing how to wrestle the right way. I also feel that in not knowing how to wrestle the right way it can be extremely dangerous because you are putting yourself, and the person you are wrestling with, in danger. Which is why we (Team 3D) will like to teach. We have enough knowledge in this business and we have accomplished so much that we’re able to pass along the knowledge to the younger generation. So this business isn’t a lost art. So this business can continue to be the great business that it is.”*

Canada, the USA, Mexico and Japan are some of the countries with great wrestling Academies. Going to these training facilities is the only way to make the first step in the right direction. You need to be trained by real Pro wrestlers, people who know what they are doing, people who made money in this business because they are skilled. One of those good academies is the Team 3D Academy in Orlando, Florida, run by the Team 3D themselves (formerly known

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6. Gimmick: a wrestler’s personality and/or other distinguishing traits while performing.

as Dudley Boyz). In my interview with him, Bubba Ray (part of Team 3D) said:

*“Me and Devon decided long time ago that we always want that to open up a wrestling school, but it wasn’t until late 2005 early 2006 that we really decided that it was something that we wanted to do. When we left WWE we worked on some of the independents through out the United States and we was how poor the young wrestlers have been trained, we saw how they have a lack of respect, we saw how the art of Pro Wrestling was being lost. So we decided that it was our responsibility to give back to the wrestling business and help to train people with the right respect for the business and the right knowledge of the business. This way the business can continue to drive for years, you know, on in. After two and a half years the school has a great reputation as being a very respectful school. A lot of kids come out of here that are moving forward with their careers and that’s why we decided to open up the school.”*

If you do not have the economic means to travel to those places yet, keep working to save money and keep working out in your free time, read about wrestling and practice some sport which can improve your cardiovascular efficiency and guarantee a solid athletic background. Watching video interviews also is a useful activity to get a good insight of the Wrestling World.

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On a final note, it is very important to be trained in a proper way and to start having matches and participating in wrestling shows only when the time is right. When a man does not wrestle in the proper way, he is just hurting this business and he is disgracing the efforts and the memory of the veterans who gave their all for wrestling. He is also disrespecting all those young talents who have a great passion and are trying to work their way to the top. By doing this, that man is putting himself and the other people working with him in danger. In the book *Friday Night in the Coliseum*, Holly Valentine states:

*“Wrestling is an art because if you don’t know what you’re doing, you know you’re going to die.”*

Many fans are used to going to meet WWE Pro Wrestlers at the hotel they are staying in, after or before the show, asking them pictures and autographs. If you are not specifically invited by some of them at the hotel, showing up there is a form of disrespect. That is the only free time they have for some privacy. The typical fan thinks, “I’m buying his merchandise and DVDs, they are superstars only because fans cheer for them, they are celebrities, so what’s the problem in asking them pictures or autographs?”. The problem is that you get what you pay for. If you pay to see wrestlers perform, you are entitled to that. If you pay to get pictures or autographs, you get them. But when the lights go out and the show is over, wrestler do not owe you anything. They are just normal people with the need for some privacy. A Pro Wrestler is not supposed to ask another Pro

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Wrestler for pictures or autographs. I did when I was wrestling just for hobby, but later I stopped doing it as soon as I realized that was a mistake. When you are an upcoming Pro Wrestler, meeting WWE wrestlers can be good to get some information about training and, most importantly, to get precious advice for your career. But keep in mind that it is ok if somebody voluntarily invites you at the hotel or in the backstage of the show. If you know the right people, the wrestlers will know who you are and what are you doing there. At least, if you randomly meet some Pro Wrestlers at the airport, at the restaurant, at the bar or anywhere else, just introduce yourself as an upcoming Pro Wrestler, say your name and where you have been trained (it is best if you have been trained in a good wrestling school, or just forget about it) or where you wrestle. Say hello and then leave. In fact, as Pro Wrestlers do not owe anything to the fans, they do not have to share their experience with somebody they do not know. If they want to share a drink and give some advice, they let you know and you can stay with them, but do not expect that your presence will be accepted just because you are in the business too. Respect their privacy.

## **2.2 It is not about the moves**

During the last show I participated in Switzerland before moving to Florida, I asked a friend for some information about the 3D Academy because he had trained there before. Later, I overheard some

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amateur wrestlers questioning the validity of that school. Referring to Team 3D/Dudley Boyz, one of those amateur wrestlers said that “They do not do many moves, they do not look really athletic. I do not know what they can teach you”. However, after hearing this criticism, I foolishly took this point of view into consideration. Back then, I still lacked the maturity to understand that Pro Wrestling is not merely a series of great moves but it is about the ability to excite an audience with an intelligent match. The reason why I decided to attend the 3D Academy was to increase my in-ring psychology. I did not really care about learning new moves, as I already did in my Canadian wrestling training spell.

First of all, the fact that you do not see Bubba Ray performing a Hurricanrana or Devon performing a Head-Scissors does not mean they can not teach it. They have 15 years of experience in Pro Wrestling so they know those moves better than some high-flying style wrestlers you can see in wrestling today. But this is not the point. What I missed, which is what most of the wrestlers of the new generation still are missing, is to understand that Pro Wrestling is not about the moves. In a video interview released to the Pro Wrestling promotion Ring Of Honor, Jim Cornette states:

*“The check is the same for the match whether you go to the hospital or whether have a nice match and go home to your family. So, I’m not saying don’t work hard, don’t lay your body on the line in the right situation, pick your spots, and more importantly, it’s not about how many bumps you take, it’s when you take the bump that you*

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*do take, and whether the people like it, remember it, and it means something. Get the match over, you don't have to kill yourself. Everybody needs to think more and bump less and realize that it's performance art. You're telling a story, connecting with the audience, and if you have the personality, capability, and the psychology...and there's been a lot of people that weren't real athletic in this business that made a lot of money just because they can get the people here (pointing his head)."*

This speech describes best what is going today in the Pro Wrestling world. Actually, this problem is constantly monitored by people behind the scenes in WWE. However, the situation in the Indies is completely rampant. It is mutating with crazy daredevil matches, wrestlers jumping everywhere, taking risks and performing thousand of moves without making any sense, without even selling<sup>7</sup> one of those moves. Wrestlers are battering each other violently in hardcore matches (chapter 2.4 Is it Hardcore or Backyard wrestling?). Mick Foley's jump from the top of the cage, during the 1998 WWE King Of The Ring Pay-Per-View event, looks a piece of cake compared to some insane bumps that several wrestlers in the Indies offer today. However, those crazy stunts do not sells ticket as well as they think.

As a big fan of cruiserweight high-flying matches like I was, I was also jumping around like a monkey, doing thousand of moves without sense and prostituting all of those that I did not sell. Those

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7. Sell: reacting to an opponent's attacks in a manner that suggests that the techniques are being applied at full-force.

guys, involved in those matches, work hard and I certainly respect them. However, they are performing in a way that is hurting Pro Wrestling. Those kind of matches I used to do don't have any sense. I always tried to put some psychology in, but it was less than the 25% of what it should be in. A wrestling video game has probably more psychology, because there is a real accumulated damage which creates a true meaning in the match (see chapter 2.3 Ring psychology and telling a story). In the places where I used to wrestle in Italy, matches with many different moves get more success than the other matches. I thought that what I was doing was a good thing because I had some crowd reaction. As low level wrestlers, we thought that their reason people clapped the hands like in a circus, showed their appreciation just for the athleticism, did not understand what is was going on and did not cheer for anybody, was because they were not familiar with wrestling. The truth is that our shows were so poor that only athleticism could generate reactions. I did not get the people to support me at all, they just clapped their hands because of my fancy moves. But they did not suffer, rejoice, laugh, get mad, love me or hate me as in a legitimate competition. People are not stupid and they do not need some kind of special instruction on how to watch a wrestling show. It is the wrestlers' duty to make the audience believe in what they see and get them to react.

Being too technical, even as a gimmick, is not improving the skill to sell tickets. People do not care how technical the wrestlers are if they do not have any reason to cheer. They do not pay to see an Olympic freestyle wrestling match. They pay to be entertained. Even

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Kurt Angle, who is an Olympic gold medalist, updated his style to the entertainment standard. At the same time, being too rude and stiff is not helping a wrestler look a more like a bad ass. People do not care how vicious and rude the wrestlers are if they do not have any reason to boo them. They do not pay to see a legitimate fight. They pay to be entertained. Even Bret Hart, who is notorious for his good shots (by its own admission at the WWE Hall Of Fame 2006), never injured anybody in his 25-years career. Being too athletic does not make wrestlers better performers. A circus crew can do every kind of jump you have ever imagined and make a wrestler's moon-sault look ridiculous. People do not care how athletic the wrestlers are as entertainment remains the key to success in the ring. Trying to impress WWE's or TNA's talent scout with technique, toughness and athleticism is not the way to get a job there. They have already seen everything.

Thus, can technique, toughness and athleticism increase wrestlers' skills? Of course they can. But everything has to be proportional and has to make sense. In other words, there are no bumps, moves or acrobatics that can sell tickets by themselves. Pro Wrestling is entertainment and wrestlers do not need a specific skill but they need the ability to take different pieces of technique, toughness and athleticism and put them together. The result are performers like Ric Flair, Dusty Rhodes, Sting, Shawn Michaels and Stone Cold Steve Austin and many more.

## 2.3 Ring psychology and telling a story

At the very beginning of my career, my matches were just spot<sup>8</sup> festivals. I was just putting together moves, selecting some “cool” spots out of WWE and TNA matches, remembering and performing them like a stuntman in a circus. My matches looked like highlight videos, sequences of spots unconnected to each other. In my interview with him, Jim Cornette said:

*“It’s called “As seen on TV”. They see the guys in the WWE, they see some guys in TNA, they see guys on television that have the job that they like to have, and they see what they doing and they try to copy that. They don’t understand that just because guys have a job it doesn’t mean that they do everything right. I’m not knocking the whole industry or the whole business or everybody in it. I want the talent to succeed. The problem is in the process of guys now getting in the business they already know from reading the internet, the already think they know exactly how is done, they think they know everything about it. You can’t replace experience, experience in front of a live crowd, experience in having matches with different type of wrestlers and doing different type of things.”*

Knowing a good deal of ring psychology is the key to be successful in telling a story. Knowing psychology in Pro Wrestling

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8. Spot: a preplanned sequence of moves.

means having the ability to perform the moves and put them together in a way that makes sense to the audience, a way that makes everything the wrestlers do in the ring look real, a way that depicts the matches as competitions between fighters who really want to win. That is why Pro Wrestling is an art. A match without psychology is just a stunt performance.

With this being said, what does actually make sense? Selling the whole match properly, act and react as you were in a real fight, considering the amount of given and suffered damage, the different size between different wrestlers, the stipulation of the matches, the storyline behind the matches and so much more. I am not going too deep on this subject, because it is not my goal to teach these notions in this book. However, I am going to make a couple of examples to make sure that such notions are understandable.

In a Tag Team match, when a wrestler has suffered a beatdown for a while, he should tag his partner in as soon as he has the chance to do it because this is what is supposed to happen in a real fight, it is the most logical action to do. Unfortunately, many times, the wrestler who is being beaten down does not try to tag his partner in at all. Furthermore, even when he fights back, he just fights his opponent instead of running away and try to make a tag. That is because these wrestlers stick to what they planned: they are just waiting for the hot tag, which is the point in which finally the wrestler that was being beaten down makes the tag. That is bad psychology. In fact, if the wrestler that is being dominated in the ring does not show that he wants to make a tag, the hot tag will not be hot at all because

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there is no emotion behind it. This means that even the attempt to make a tag, as easy as it may seem, is a story being told. Another example of bad ring psychology is a match won by submission with an arm lock if the arm of the wrestlers that taps out was never touched or hit throughout the whole match. The entertainment aspect should not be considered more important than the psychology factor and the aspect of telling a story.

Having a “spot festival” match also means that wrestlers do not listen to the crowd and they do not heat up the audience. Pro Wrestling can not be just acting.

In my interview with him, Jim Cornette said:

*“When you plan everything out ahead of time and you stick to that plan if the audience is not buying what you’re selling than you don’t have nowhere to go and how to change it because you’re sticking to a set routine. What’s get over in Pittsburgh might not get over in Orlando and that might not get over in Dallas. You have to listen to the people, what type of crowd do you have. Are they in mood don’t like things, they wanna laugh, they wanna get mad, what do they want? And when you have a set routine and you’re gonna perform no matter what audience that you are doing yourself a disservice because you’re not having the best match you can have. And there’s a lot of changing in wrestling business and it’s not easy to do the right thing as is used to be, but at the same time you really should go in with the story you’re gonna tell but not a script. In*

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*other words, when you tell a joke, you don't have to set up the same way every time but the punch line is always the same. So, a match it's like telling a story, you don't always tell the story in the same way, but the point of the story, the punch line of the story, the payoff of the story... that's always the same. So you adjust your story to your audience and then you hit them with the "go home" line and that should make it work."*

The people do not even realize when wrestlers are telling them a good and believable story, because they unconsciously appreciate what they see in the ring; and they do because it looks real and it make sense. On the other hand, when the in-ring performance is just an act, the people do not understand what is going on in the ring. Some matches have so many spots that, at some point, it is not even clear what the goal is. As a consequence, the people will not believe the match and the story told through it.

Children stories begin with: "Once upon a time...". Pro Wrestling stories begin with: The babyface is the better man, sometimes also the better wrestler, and the heel has to cheat to win. The babyface is smarter and he is always right. The babyface never backs down. That is more or less the basis on which wrestlers tell their stories. Whatever the story is going to be, just keep in mind that the storyline also has a huge influence. Along with it, the wrestlers' gimmicks and the stipulation of the matches have an important part in the story. In conclusion, the right approach to starting a wrestling match is

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asking yourself “What story are we going to tell?”.

## 2.4 Is it Hardcore or Backyard Wrestling?

Emulating hardcore matches has always been easier than having a proper old school classic match. Building good hardcore matches is a whole different story. However, given the fact that it is seen just as a street fight with weapons or objects of every kind along with heavy blood spilling, it is quite easy for an amateur Indy to pair up two guys and have them beat each other like the TV show “Jackass”. Everybody can do it, no big brains are needed to set up such thing. In the USA, buying a wrestling ring is not expensive, people can easily play wrestling on a Pro Wrestling ring rather than in their backyard, but it is still what we call “backyard wrestling”, which is the worst kind of emulation of Pro Wrestling.

In a real Pro Wrestling promotion, bad hardcore matches also affect the quality of the whole show. Especially in some Indies in which hardcore matches feature two wrestlers hitting each other with chair shots, they continue bleeding and fighting even without selling those shots; later that night, in the main event, the heel wrestler wins the match by cheating and hitting his opponent with just ONE chair shot. This is because those wrestlers do not want to spend their money to get properly trained and they just want to step inside the ring and play the “today I’m Mick Foley” game, like children.

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But when they emulate Mick Foley, they only emulate the violence of his matches, while completely ignoring the psychology behind his matches during the WWE period. Those emulating wrestlers can not even take a bump, they hit each other with neon lights and barbed wire for so much time and they hurt each other and themselves, just to show how tough they are. And they call themselves Pro Wrestlers. Those “companies” that promote such foolishness should not even include the word “wrestling” in their name. Those people are a disgrace to Pro Wrestling. In the book *Friday Night in the Coliseum*, Holly Valentine states:

*“Killer Kowalski was my godfather, and we are very close. He’s a great wrestler. He never went in there and deliberately messed somebody up with no artistic value. Other guys are just big and mean. They aren’t wrestlers, not to me. There’s nothing to see when you watch them. Just growling and maybe some blood. That’s never been what wrestling was about. But there are a lot of people now who go to see one guy get sacrificed to another, you know, gladiators and that kind of thing.”*

In the documentary *Bret Hart - Wrestling with Shadows*, Bret Hart states:

*“The real art of Professional Wrestling is to do it, like, full contact and everything... to do it, you should never get hurt. If you ever get hurt, it’s because you did something wrong. And you should never hurt anybody else. I got*

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*into wrestling, I've been wrestling 20 years and I've never hurt anybody. I mean, it's been full contact, very physical, but when you come back to the dressing room, after, you should be able to put your boots on and go home. Like, you had a long day, but no more than a football player or anybody else. To purposely or intentionally hurt yourself or hurt someone else.. it's like... there's no art in that."*

In my interview with him, Devon (part of Team 3D) said:  
*"The thing will make hardcore wrestling is good psychology, also not just using weapons in a match just to use them. People in hardcore wrestling now days when you watch them, they use a trash can, or they use a hockey stick, for no reason."*

It is not necessary to throw somebody through a table every single time just to get a huge response from the crowd. In fact, the best way to receive a good response is to build up the match until the crowd really believes that somebody will be thrown through a table, even if, at the end, he is not. As a result, the crowd gets excited and the table it is safe for the next match. On the other hand, having wrestlers repeatedly thrown through tables no longer makes table crashing a special happening but a habit. Which means that involving tables in matches becomes common and it is necessary to use more and more dangerous weapons and to take riskier bumps in order to get a huge crowd response. By acting this way, wrestlers have

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to face an incredible escalation of violence and risk taking which, at some point, crosses the line. That is why, at some point, the management of the original ECW decided to lower their level of violence. Back in the days when WWE and WCW were competing each others, kicking out of a pin attempt after taking three chair shots was the habit; later, when WWE established his position as the world's number 1 company, Vince McMahon decided to slowly lower the level of violence in order not to expose his wrestlers to injuries and, at the same time, re-establish the credibility of a "chair shot".

In conclusion, this does not mean that hardcore matches should disappear, but a match without good psychology and appropriate selling is not Pro Wrestling. Therefore, keep in mind that having a hardcore match is not an excuse for wrestlers to ignore the bases of Pro Wrestling. Most importantly, make the chair shot or any other weapon hit mean something. In order to make a crowd believe that a hardcore match is about serious punishment, good selling is essential. Hitting each other is something everybody can do, telling a story is not. Showing this part of one's own ability is the best way for an upcoming wrestler to be believable and very professional.

## 2.5 Internet negativity

Fans should just enjoy a wrestling show rather than argue on business decisions about keeping wrestlers on the roster rather than firing them or putting some other wrestlers over. I have argued

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about wrestling companies' decisions in the past, from the WWE to the smallest Indy "wannabes". Message boards are overflowing with comments and criticism. People also post their video-reviews on YouTube. However, these people do not truly understand this business. Those who really understand Pro Wrestling do not waste any time arguing, because as they are striving to become wrestlers, promoters, managers and wrestling reporters. In my interview with him, Bubba Ray (part of Team 3D) said:

*"As far as the criticism is concerned everybody is in title to their opinion but you have to understand the people who write these articles on the internet have never been in a wrestling ring once. They make their livelihood off guys like me, and every other wrestlers that are out there busting their ass. You know, they can have an opinion but don't ever disrespect what we do, we work very hard out there. I'm not a big fan of the internet, specially when it gives away what we do from week to week in Pro Wrestling. [...] If you are an upcoming wrestler I suggest you stay away from the internet 'cause it does absolutely no good for you."*

If a wrestler writes negative criticism in an open forum, as it often happens on the internet, this can be a double edge blade for that wrestler the moment he is trying to achieve success into the Pro Wrestling World. I learned very quickly that this was something that an upcoming wrestler should not do. Many discussions on mes-

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sage boards about some Indies feature answers by Indy wrestlers themselves who criticize other wrestlers and other companies. This approach has no point whatsoever, as it brings almost no good to the business. Even though people use fake accounts and screen nicknames, they take the risk of being put aside, due to the fact that the Pro Wrestling World may seem large from the outside but it is a tight-knit community. Bubba Ray also states:

*“It doesn’t take a big man to sit there behind his keyboard and say this guy sucks, his match sucks. So if my match sucks so bad why you don’t you get in the ring with me and see... you know... do what I do.”*

Mistakes are made in this industry all the time. Posting videos which criticize or defame other wrestlers best exemplifies this. It is legitimate to post Tribute videos on the internet, but degrading videos and offensive comments are no good for the wrestling world.

When I started wrestling, I was uploading videos on YouTube.com about WWE and TNA. Some of them were tribute videos, but I also made videos criticizing WWE business decisions. Those videos never changed anything and were just a waste of time. Even though I received no direct backfire for this, it is now crystal clear why some WWE decisions have been made (see chapter 3.1 Understand business decisions). However, back then, I was still immature and not experienced enough in the business. My videos garnered well over 50,000 views and I had not realized the negativity of what I was doing until someone told me how stupid and useless it was

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making those videos, warning me of the consequences I would have faced if I continued on that path.

There is also another aspect of the internet who is very negative for wrestling. It is the leak of information from inside the wrestling federations that the internet is giving. Bubba Ray also states:

*“As far the internet is consider with Pro Wrestling, I think that the internet has ruined a lot of entertainment in general because is always telling you what’s gonna happened before it’s happening. So there’s no reason to have to see the show. You know I remember as a kid, watching you know NWA or WWF I had to turn in every week to see what’s going to happened. Now you never even have to watch the show, you can just go in the internet and read what happened.”*

Hopefully, this leak of information has also a positive aspect. In some countries, there is no way of watching wrestling except via internet. Years ago, I actually stopped watching wrestling because there was no more WWF broadcasts on TV, there were no newspapers and there was no Internet yet. Especially in western Europe, where wrestling is not very popular, only a few people could watch wrestling broadcasts on the pay TV. The majority of people could watch wrestling only if there are some wrestling broadcasts on the free TV or on the Internet. A wrestler can also use the Internet in order to learn more about the wrestling universe by watching a huge variety of videos of matches and interviews. Especially some old

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footage from the '70s and the '80s that can not be found anywhere else.

The Internet is also useful for wrestlers in order to send videos their matches to promoters. Posting videos of highlights is no use for wrestlers, because those videos only emphasize athleticism and it is not what a good promoter is looking for. It is much more interesting for a promoter to watch a video of a whole match in order to evaluate the use of the psychology in the match by the wrestler. The video should also feature the original audio in order to determine how proficient is a wrestler in establishing contact with the audience, in selling the moves and in being a believable character; with these elements, the promoter can notice how good a wrestler really is. Therefore, be very careful when using the Internet: it could be good for your career but it could also harm it.

## 2.6 The Referee

Everyone who enters the Wrestling business wants to be a Superstar and wants to be under the spotlight. However, in Pro Wrestling, the figure of the Referee is very important and it is an essential part of the picture. Most of the time, the importance and the involvement of the Referee in this business are underestimated. In the Indy circuit, it is very hard to find a good Referee. Everyone wants to wrestle and, even if they are not able to wrestle due to their lack of physical condition or talent, they do not want to be a Referee

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because it is generally considered as a less important figure and as a role that does not request any knowledge or ability. This is also the reason why, many times, the Referee is played by a friend of the Promoter or the wrestlers, which means the Referee is played by someone who has no wrestling acquaintance or awareness whatsoever, someone picked out of the blue.

The Referee is the one who makes sure that everyone plays by the rules and he also gives those rules a meaning. The Referee is not just someone wearing a black and white striped T-shirt. He is the one who determines the winner of the match and he is also the connection between the wrestlers in the ring. It is very important to have a good Referee. The Indy promoters who book low-quality Referees must understand that they are putting their own wrestlers in danger and they are lowering the quality of their product. Even though a heel wrestler plays his role right, how can the crowd react properly if the Referee is not calling on the heel wrestler to respect the rules? How can people understand what is legal in the match and what is not? How can wrestlers set up a good heat spot<sup>9</sup> or a finish to the match that includes the Referee if the Referee himself can not be trusted?

Being a Referee is a huge responsibility that not everybody can handle. It also requests the awareness that the Referee has to be present as an authority but invisible as a person during a match. A Referee is not a Superstar, not even somebody who has fans and people asking for his pictures and autograph. It sounds easy to understand but it is not that easy. Referees who sell their own merchandise

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9. Heat Spot: when the bad guy cheat to get control over the good guy, and the Referee does not see it.

and act like Superstars are marks<sup>10</sup> who failed as Pro Wrestlers; so they try to keep themselves under the spotlight as Referees. Once such thoughts are successfully put aside, it is possible to undertake the career of the Referee. Even if it is hard to accept, the Referee's career stands in the shadow of the careers of wrestlers, managers and even commentators.

Even though they have almost no consideration and no support from the fans, Referees are very much respected inside the Pro Wrestling World. A good Referee is somebody you can trust, somebody who gave up his dreams of fame and glory but is still working hard every night. He does not have fans among the attendance, but he has many fans in the locker room.

For everybody who wants to become a Pro Wrestling Referee, it has to be clear that being a Referee is no joke, it is not a replacement job. Not everybody can become a Pro Wrestler, but the career of the Referee requires the same effort and the same serious approach, which starts in a Pro Wrestling Academy. A Referee is not a loser.

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10.Mark: person who is always putting himself at the top.

# PRO WRESTLING'S BUSINESS

## 3.1 Understand business decisions

As a promoter or a wrestler, it is very important to understand some important business decisions made through the years by major wrestling companies such as WWE, WCW, AWA, NWA, TNA. As a promoter, it does not matter to run a billionaire company or a small Indy. Smart decisions must be made anyway. In order to be successful with a small Indy, it is necessary to think like a small-scale Vince McMahon<sup>11</sup>. Having money is not enough to be successful. WCW had almost unlimited economic means, but it collapsed because of bad business decisions.

The first step is to analyze those decisions and especially some decisions that you might not agree with. If it is not clear why some decision have been made, instead of getting angry like a crazy fan, a Pro Wrestler should ask himself "Why did they made that decision?" and should not watch the business from a fan prospective. He has to look at it from a business man prospective, thinking like an individual who has a company to carry about. And this is exactly what I did when I asked myself about WWE's business decisions about John Cena.

One of the most discussed business decisions made by the WWE during the last five years is to put John Cena over. Some wrestling fans are still furious with this decision based on the popular

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11.Vince McMahon: currently serves as the chairman and CEO of professional wrestling promotion World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) and is the majority shareholder of the company.



opinion that his wrestling style and gimmick is too boring and too limited. Expressions of criticism on message boards and derogatory videos have been posted all over the web. However, in wasting time behind a keyboard making pointless videos, they have failed to understand that there are hundreds of possible gimmicks John Cena could have played. However, considering his best skills on the microphone, which are talking and rapping, the gimmicks already used, the entertaining ability, the concept of the superstars of the future, WWE transformed John Cena into the character we see today. Throughout the last five years, history has proven that this gimmick fits him perfectly. John Cena is now one of the biggest stars of this decade.

I was not being very objective when I talked about Cena as a boring wrestler, maybe because of my dislike for him. My opinion of Cena began to shift in his favour when I began to delve deeper into the art of Pro Wrestling. His matches are classic “baby face” matches and, on many occasions, they are built up very well. I also thought he was being depicted as some kind of a superman because of his winning streak and his successful comebacks. I considered him a bad wrestler because of the limited number of moves he could perform. This way of thinking only proved that I truly did not understand what was at the core of Pro Wrestling. Like I said before, this business is not about the moves and John Cena, Hulk Hogan and Ultimate Warrior are the prove that you can make money and be successful doing less than ten moves.

As a WWE product, there is almost no difference between

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Hulk Hogan and John Cena. So, as a Pro Wrestling gurus, like critics think of themselves, why would someone consider Hulk Hogan's in-ring style, winning streak and legacy legitimate, while rejecting John Cena's? In the '80s, there were also people who did not like Hulk Hogan for the same reasons, but Vince McMahon did not care simply because they represented less than 10% of the fans. Today it is no different. There seems to be a large number of people who critic John Cena and the internet seems to inflate that large number of people. In reality, they still represent less than 10% of the fans. However, even if that percentage of fans grows higher than 10%, Vince McMahon will probably keep Cena on the scenes until he has recuperated his investments. It is about the marketing quality, not the wrestling quality. Even if there were short periods in which John Cena's popularity decreased, keeping him over was never a problem. It does not matter if people boo him at the shows, they have already paid their ticket and decided to go to the arena anyway. Their dislike for Cena does not make any difference and, in addition to it, keeping him over is still a smart business decision, even through some periods of waning popularity,. In fact, John Cena is still very popular. He became the money making machine the WWE needed. Whether you like him or not, this Pro Wrestler needs some credit. His WWE schedules is backbreaking and grueling, he is a multi-time world champion, a top star of WWE's Monday Night RAW and he has traveled and wrestled extensively all over the world.

WWE/ECW One Night Stand 2006 is the perfect example of how Vince McMahon has the ability to move around a problem and

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obtain profit. After many months of domination, John Cena lost the WWE title during that night in a perfect scenario. The smart decision was not just to make him lose, but it also involved the way that the whole scenario was developed. Cena's popularity was quite low in that period, probably the worst since he became a top superstar. Vince knew that and he thought that maybe it was a good idea to take the title away from Cena. But how could he do it and make everybody happy at the same time? By setting up a perfect scenario. Cena did not lose the title because the crazy ECW crowd from New York was threatening his popularity. McMahon chose to set up a Pay-Per-View event with those fans to create that scenario. Probably, the whole One Night Stand event has been made at that specific time just for John Cena. Cena's detractors kept watching WWE broadcasts, hoping he was going to lose the title some day. That Pay-Per-View event was a small treat to make Cena's every detractor happy: a match in a perfect scenario, with an entire arena booing Cena for the whole match and a whole crowd going crazy for his defeat. For those fans who really hated him, Cena's defeat was like winning the Superbowl. As a result, Vince McMahon made happy all those people and he did not lose them as spectators. At the same time, because of the perfect scenario in which Cena was the victim, WWE kept all Cena's supporters who were angry because their favourite superstar was back stabbed that night. After a while, Cena won the title back. And that is what I call a smart business decision.

If some day the majority of fans will really be fed up with Cena, the WWE could turn him heel and make money one again, just

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like when WCW did when Hulk Hogan turned heel.

This is just an example, it is something I know very well. However, as a Pro Wrestler it is really important to understand business decisions.

## 3.2 Entertainment does not mean “fake”

People often ask wrestlers whether wrestling is real or fake. Pro Wrestling is not merely a fight nor a competition, it is a predetermined show. However, the contact is there. Bodies are smashed in a wood and pad ring with a huge wallop. Wrestling includes the use of the whole body, which means being in a very good shape, at the same or at a superior level of any other professional sport or form of entertainment. There are many sports which are much better remunerated and request less performance. That is why “fake” is not the appropriate word. Actually, it is very offensive. In my interview with him, Devon (part of Team 3D) said: “This business isn’t fake. If this business was fake, than everybody can do it. And that’s not the case.” Being a Pro Wrestler requires a strong physical condition and a huge mental involvement. In the book Friday Night in the Coliseum, Johnny Valentine states:

*“I don’t take long vacations because it take too long to get back into condition. Condition here isn’t just having good wind and muscle tone. Condition in wrestling is taking*

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*punishment so your skin won't get tender, and so you won't get mentally soft. If I took two months off, all the hide would come of my knees in the first round. It would get tender, and I'd get mat burns. You'd be nothing but a mass of sores from being pushed around the ring. The body is a strange thing. It can absorb so much punishment. It can get accustomed to it, taking progressively break harder things, until they can split bricks without hurting their hand. The whole body is like that. The body just builds up resistance to pain. It's partly physical and partly mental.*

*When a guy throws you out of the ring onto your back on the concrete floor there is no way to fall. No secret will help you. The only thing you can do when you're thrown is tuck your head, pull in your arms, and try to tuck your feet a little bit so nothing is flopping and will get broken. That's all you can do.*

*The rest is mental. I'm not impressed if someone throws me over their head. Most people would be, but I'm not impressed so it doesn't bother me. It's funny, you just relax and keep your head"*

Every time a Pro Wrestler steps into the ring, he puts his own body on the line. No match is really completely predictable. It is necessary to be ready for everything and be prepared for any even-

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tuality. Sometimes, even if it might not be possible to finish a match, a Pro Wrestler has to. Johnny Valentine also states:

*“I don’t remember the last fall with Funk at all. I must have dropped on my head when I threw him in the second fall, because that’s the last thing I remember. I came around in the dressing room after the match. I must have fought the last fall on instinct. They told me later I was disqualified for holding him in the ropes”*

The question of predetermination in this business is the main argument that Pro Wrestling detractors use against the athletes practicing it, because these critics say that predetermination is the weakest part of sports entertainment. Even though critics know that all forms of entertainment are predetermined, they still scrutinize wrestling even after they are aware of the physical and mental involvement required for it.

Everything in entertainment is molded prior to the result seen by the audience. This is the case of TV shows like Big Brother or Survivor. Real life in a house, 24/7, can be boring; that is why producers make sure that participants argue over controversial topics and situations. “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?” is probably real, but the host induces the competitor to spend time thinking about the right answer even when they know it, in order to extend the show and fit right in the commercial schedule. Another example that contradicts the critics is represented by the illusionists’ shows. From the time when the audience walks through the door until they leave

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the theater, they know that they are seeing an illusion and nobodies really believes the illusionist can truly fly or make people float. However, no one would dare to call those shows fake.

Pro Wrestling deserves more respect and every Pro Wrestler has the duty to support this business. A good performer should always have a proper answer for any critic or journalist. Supporting Pro Wrestling to its fullest was demonstrated in 1984: during an interview, Pro Wrestler David Schultz (known in the WWE as Dr. D.) was asked if Pro Wrestling was fake; he responded by slapping the journalist twice and knocking him down each time. The journalist eventually filed a lawsuit against the WWE and settled out of court for \$425,000 ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)). Pro Wrestling hangs in the balance on a thin line between those people who love it for its entertainment and those who hate it and feel it is fake and stupid. Even the media always try to put it down because of major sports pressure. In Western Europe, it is all about soccer and no other sport or form of entertainment has such a large TV coverage as soccer has; simultaneously, in the USA, Pro Wrestling and soccer are repressed in order not to “steal” audience from the major sports.

Pro Wrestling is also considered the ultimate celebration of violence. Through the years, society has always blamed music, movies, video games and Pro Wrestling to justify the inglorious act of the X and Y generations, instead of admitting societal and parental mistakes.

## 3.3 Good Business

In order to keep this business safe and run an Indy properly, the only way is to only book Pro Wrestlers which are people who have been trained correctly. In Europe, for example, bad Indies with bad wrestlers killed the business. As a result of their low quality shows, people now have a negative perception of Pro Wrestling and it is very hard for the good Indies to be trusted and to get the crowd back. In my interview with him, Jim Cornette said:

*“Nothing will hurt the business worse than somebody buys a ticket and goes to see a wrestling show and it sucks. And they say “Boy we don’t wanna do that anymore.” And they won’t come back. The problem is now when all the old time promoters that did this full time for living, they’ve been wrestlers and became promoters and have a business that took care that protect the credibility of wrestling that protected the public relationship factor of wrestling they protect their business, they want people to think good about them right? They all went away when Vince made the national expansion, most of them were rich anyway and they just retired kept the money and get out of the business. So now, it will be like suddenly if Pro Basketball is completely deregulated and everybody who can find five guys and a ball and a net could call them self a Pro Basketball team. Than would Pro Basketball have a good name? I think not. A lot of guys who are really talented still wrestle*

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*as a hobby because there are not that many places to go to get a full time job in wrestling anymore. So is not just guys who wrestle as a hobby, it's good wrestlers versus bad wrestlers. It's a good promoter versus a bad promoter.*

*A good promoter has access to some quality talent that can perform well in the ring, will show up on time and give a good show. He knows how to promote a show in his local city, he knows the places to go to get the word out, he charges a fair ticket price, he has a good show, people like it and come back.*

*A bad promoter books all his buddies and all his friends that he fucks around in the backyard with, he doesn't promote except on the internet because that would mean going out and actually doing work, he pays the guys very little, he rents a shitty building somewhere has it out in a parking lot and for the people who do come and pay to see this you got a bad promoter staging a bad show with bad wrestlers in a unconformable venue and people go "Why do we want to see that again?" So even next time if they see a show advertised by a good promoter with good wrestlers how do they know the difference? They just think "They burned me once, there not going to do it again". So it's the deregulation of wrestling and the throwing open of the field where everybody especially the states with no*

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*athletic commission where everybody can be involved in it that's hurt wrestling also because when people see staff like that, when people see somebody holding somebody down and firing a staple gun in to it like in "The Wrestler". For two or three hundred college age adolescent males with not a lot to do that's cool. But for the rest of organized society they think "Well that guy must be a blithering freaking idiot" and "Why do we want to bring our kids to see something like that or why we wanna pay to see something like that" or "Why do we even want to associate with somebody like that would shot them self with staple gun or break fluorescent light tubes over the head" and they see the movie "The Wrestler" doesn't help either.*

*So that's precisely the point: people in our business hurt our business more than the people outside the business. People who do stupid things or people who run bad shows or people who use untrained wrestlers or people who generally give wrestling a bad name that comes from within instead of without. All the bad publicity in the world never hurt Pro Wrestling for all those decades as long as the wrestling and the people who run it were good and knew what they needed to do and they gave good shows to their fans who like it. But when that went out and a way and all these changes came all of sudden you had harder core style with a harder style in the ring and the guys getting*

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*hurt and you had people who didn't get in to it for a living but just for a thrill doing everything in the world to please their friends and weren't worried about whether the fans will like or not and all that basically gave wrestling a bad name to mainstream America. If it's not WWE they figure, now TNA has come along, but before they compared the other stuff to WWE as minor league and they were right. But now WWE has run many wrestling fans off because it's all soap opera and cartoony and staged and choreographed and contrived and the people who like wrestling before because they wanted to believe these guys were the toughest guys in the world and they were really fighting, now they see that they don't. "It's not real." So they found something else to do. So now the WWE has created sport entertainment fans that just go to see the show and laugh at it. TNA is trying to get wrestling fans who like to see some wrestling and there's not much else."*

About the promoters, In my interview with him, Devon (part of Team 3D) said:

*"I think that the promoters who are good, and the one who bring in a really good wrestlers... if your storyline, your wrestlers are good, that your business will be good. Sometimes you have to loose in order too gain in the end. In other words, sometimes you have to suffer, maybe not so many people show up at your show, you know, until*

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*you can actually put on a show that people start to taking about and people want to come to see. It's something that this business always has to be with. But ECW was a prime example. You have so many little companies that were putting out bad stuff and ECW had to be hurt by that end of things when they first started coming out, until we've had fans, one fan tells another fan who tells another who tells another fan, "Hey, these guys are for real. They are not a joke. They are not bad wrestlers. The storyline are good. Come see ECW." One person tells one, that person tells another and before you know it, ECW became a big company."*

These answers by Jim Cornette and Devon describe the present situation and the reality so well that there is not much more to say, if not just a few more points.

Today people want to see in a live Pro Wrestling show what they see on TV, such as WWE shows, so the promoter has to give them what they want, but at the same time it is good to give them something new, fresh and different. For example, nowadays WWE does not give much credit to the tag team division anymore. This is therefore a good moment for an Indy to have a good tag team division. Given that in a Indy the wrestlers are not superstars with a renowned character and not many people know them, as a promoter it is better to make them have more contact with the crowd, to make perfectly clear who plays the heel role and who plays the face role

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right from the beginning of the match, to be more involving, to yell at the crowd or try to get their support. These kind of features are very important in a Indy.

Another problem is represented by those people who only want to see big muscled wrestlers, because that is what the WWE has set as a stereotype. As a result of this, some Indies often book wrestlers only for their huge size and not for their in-ring ability. This leads to setting up low quality and boring main events in every show.

It is good to have something innovative to offer in a show, but a promoter should not try to surprise the fans with things that do not make any sense. The secret is to always think of Pro Wrestling as a legitimate fight in a real world, with realistic storylines in which people react, fight and take action as they would do if it happened them in real life.

Being constantly inside the Pro Wrestling business makes promoters and wrestlers see it only from the inside. Sometimes, it is good to step out, look at what you are offering and evaluate it from a different prospective. Does everyone understand what is going on? Are the storylines clear? In a small Indy that sets up one show a month in different places, hardcore wrestling fans are probably less then 20%, of the attendance, those who are frequent attendants of your shows probably constitute 30% of the total attendance, but 50% of the crowd does not know your Indy, your wrestlers and your storylines at all. These are people who only watch Pro Wrestling on TV and, probably, some of them do not even do that. A good promo-

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ter has to offer a product that everyone can understand and enjoy. In bigger Indies or in Indies that organize weekly shows in the same location, it is easier to have more complex and longer storylines. However, it is important to constantly check your product. A promoter needs constant feedback by someone who does not know anything about Pro Wrestling, because that someone will ask questions about matters the promoter would not even think of, such as asking why did a wrestler react in a certain way or why that wrestler did not fight back or why and when it is allowed to use a chair.

It is really hard to be a promoter and a wrestler at the same time. The first problem is that many indies are owned by a mark (person who is always putting himself at the top), usually keeping the main title belt and all the attention of the crowd on him. This is absolutely no good for the promoter's business. A promoter might not be a mark person but, even if he puts other wrestlers over, he will have strong demands in skills from them in order to keep a good image of his company. If the promoter still wrestles, it is really hard to criticize his roster because if in the ring he does not what he demands from the other wrestlers and is criticized by others, he loses his credibility. Even if he is very good and coherent and he has good credibility, it is really hard to give 100% in something while being both a promoter and a wrestler. Pro Wrestlers can actually help their promoter, sharing their experience and their ideas.

The title belts are very important. In the Indies, wrestlers are not under contract and the promoter needs to have a champion people can look up to. Most importantly, the champion has to be

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someone who looks like a real champion. Some promoter give titles to friends or to someone they randomly pick among the members of their roster just because he needs to shake thing up. Sometimes, the promoter gives the title to veterans who call themselves veterans just because they spent ten years wrestling in that Indy. But offering the same low quality wrestling after ten years does not mean being ready to hold a title belt. If a promoter keeps in his roster someone who is no good for his company for ten years, that is not a good promoter anyway. Title matches need to be a special event and it is not necessary to put the title on the line at every show. Unfortunately, Indies and even the major companies have changed through the years. Nowadays, title matches are broadcast on TV for free and are set up too frequently.

In my interview with him, Jim Cornette said:

*“The title match having less relevance, the titles have less relevance, because people like Eric Bishoff and other people who were never performers or never involved in the wrestling business got in to it and saw it as a comedy program, as a joke, as something... it’s entertainment, nobody will take this seriously, they thought that nobody ever believed wrestling was real and of course that’s the most ignorant comment ever made because I’ve had a hundred people go to jail to take a swing at me if they thought I was a fake then why would they go to jail and have to hire a lawyer just to get a shot at me, but anyways... The titles became props you didn’t have a champion that was a clear champion like*

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*in another sport you didn't have a champion that dominated, you had people losing titles every week or two because they want to keep everything moving and everything fresh so when a title changes hands constantly, when you can see a world championship on free television almost weekly it becomes routine and therefore not anything special people need to pay to see, which is another example of people coming outside of the wrestling business who didn't know how to show any restraint and how to build to a big payoff and just wanted to throw everything out there willy nilly and that's the mistake they made."*

On a final note, in order to run a good business, not being a mark person, taking smart decision and, most importantly, only booking properly trained Pro Wrestlers are the main points to follow. Helping rookies and newcomers to grow up and have respect for this business is also something that a good wrestling company shall not lack.

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