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The Wrestlemania Era: The Book of Sports Entertainment

The Doc" Chad Matthews

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Professional wrestling has never been as popular as it has been over the last thirty years. Beginning with Hulk Hogan's rise to the top of the industry and the advent of WrestleMania, it found a place in the pop culture lexicon that made it a widely accepted, albeit still controversial, form of sports entertainment. The WWE has led the way, making the business as much about theatricality as it is about simulated combat and expanding their viewership in the process. Subsequently, a generation of fans has grown up with pro wrestling as one of their pastimes. Wrestling's growth has paralleled the rise of the media's obsession with sports. Fans enjoy greater access than ever before to their favorite teams and superstars through television and the internet. Increased coverage has brought more in-depth discussion, creating a network of enthusiasts who are as much critics as they are devotees. Sports analysis is no longer just water cooler talk. Be it as diehard supporters of respective sports enjoying educated conversations or be it as a team's employed statistician, we have become a sports world obsessed with analytics. The WWE product is more globally visible than ever. They currently broadcast their weekly programming in 150 countries and in 30 languages. Websites that cover pro wrestling draw tens of millions of people every week from around the world. Much like ESPN, Fox Sports, and others, these sites provide news, results, and insider reports. The thirst for a constant stream of information is as strong amongst wrestling fans as it is for any sport or entertainment avenue. "The Doc" Chad Matthews knows that better than anyone. He started watching wrestling with his grandfather when he was two years old. In his early college years, he began writing television recaps of WWE shows for a popular website as a hobby, later writing full-fledged critical columns and reviews while going through professional schooling to become a doctor. During the same period, he took a strong interest in analytics. Matthews eventually followed the lead of his favorite basketball writer, Bill Simmons, in combining his interest for hyper analysis with the sport that he covered. Simmons proceeded to take his analytical approach and create a list of over ninety of the greatest to have ever played in the National Basketball Association. His amazing work, The Book of Basketball: The NBA According to the Sports Guy, was the ultimate fan account of pro basketball history. Inspired, "The Doc" set out to write the modern pro wrestling equivalent. He developed a methodical criterion to support his personal observations of nearly thirty years of fandom in order to definitively answer the question as to which wrestlers belong in the debate for the greatest of all-time. While analytically reviewing and celebrating the "WrestleMania Era" dating back to the early 1980s, he spent countless hours researching, formulating, and categorizing the matches, the interviews, the main-events, the pay-per-view buyrates, the television ratings, and the championships won. A five-tiered breakdown shaped the definitive list. Through a formula (to bridge the gap between eras) for championships won, a scale for main-events and headlining matches to account for longevity, a compilation of television ratings and pay-per-view buy rate data for financial success, a wrestler scoring system to reflect physical attributes and microphone skills, and a film critic-like star rating scale to account for performance, Matthews has named the "Greatest Wrestlers of the WrestleMania Era."

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