

Real but unreal

Is pro wrestling fixed or is it genuine? A former Intercontinental champion says it's somewhere in between. Ahmed Hamdi reports on the fact and fiction and also finds out which superstars are pro-wrestling fans most excited about and with whom they have a love/hate relationship

A month before their visit to the Pharaonic land for the first time, Cody Rhodes, a bona fide WWE superstar, held a press conference at JW Marriot Hotel. With a smile rarely seen from him in the ring, Rhodes expressed his happiness to be in Egypt, saying he had always been interested in ancient Egyptian history. Son of the WWE Hall of Famer Dusty Rhodes and brother of "the bizarre one" Goldust, Rhodes went on to explain how he might be the luckiest of them. "I've been part of a sports entertainment family and my family has been part of sports entertainment for half a century, but my father, my brother, my godfather, and my uncle can't say what I'm about to say," he said. "I'm extremely excited along with the WWE to be coming to Cairo for not one but three shows in October."



Click to view caption Rhodes in his prime

Rhodes is part of the Friday Night Smackdown roster though he has been appearing on Monday Night Raw since it became three hours starting from its historic 1000 episode. Despite his busy schedule and the fact that the tour will be held during his weekly resting period, Rhodes told the press that he had volunteered to be on it.

Moving on to the mystery about the WWE does and whether it should be called professional wrestling or entertainment, Rhodes said that it's both. "What we do is sports entertainment; it's not just wrestling and not just entertainment," he explained. "What we do is like a dance," Rhodes said. The man, who was told by his father early in his career that he was too small to wrestle, continued to explain what wrestling entertainment is. "It's fixed, not fake. It's in between real and fake and that's the beauty of it."

The reality of how wrestling entertainment is produced and how wrestlers train and perform have been covered by several documentaries and Hollywood movies. The most famous film which reveals how it's done in the ring would most probably be Mickey Rourke's movie The Wrestler. Also, WWE's documentary, Beyond the Mat, which was produced in 1999, reveals much about how the shows are prepared.

How wrestlers train, though, is still a mystery, according to Rhodes. "Every show is different and every crowd is different," he told the press. "It's a mystery how it's done and I really don't know," he added.

Despite the secrecy, WWE fans can get a glimpse of what basic trainings for wrestlers are like by going to YouTube and watching episodes of WWE's reality show, Tough Enough. The show, which started on MTV 11 years ago, is based on having superstars in charge of training young talents. One by one they are eliminated each week until they get a winner. The winner would go on to have a WWE contract. During episodes, fans get to watch how routines are performed in the ring and how promos and mike skills are enhanced by the young wrestlers.

Rhodes told the press that he thought that the next WWE superstar could be an Egyptian. "I don't see why not," Rhodes said. Egyptians might get that opportunity in the years ahead as the WWE plans not to make this tour the last to Egypt. "This is not the only time we will come. We'll come again, maybe once a year," said Rhodes.

The former Intercontinental champion talked about his fellow wrestlers and who was the best in the business right now and who he thinks is his bitter rival. "I have a whole lot of respect for John Cena and all what he has done for the business," he said. "But I think CM Punk is better and he is the future of the WWE," he added. Dolph Ziggler though would be his most competitive rival, in Rhodes' opinion. "I see myself running neck to neck with Dolph Ziggler," Rhodes stated.

Although Cena and Punk will not be coming on the tour, Egyptians will get a taste of Mr Money in the Bank, Ziggler. Rhodes and Ziggler are usually booed by the WWE fans as they carry on a heel (bad guy) character in the storylines. Rhodes though would see that as a success. "The best victory for a wrestler is the crowd's reaction," Rhodes explained. He said he felt happy to be booed out of the arenas while the crowd cheered for his opponent.

Egypt will get its first taste of WWE superstars on 18, 19 and 20 October at Indoor Hall 1 at Cairo Stadium. Tickets are on sale on www.ticketmarche.com, www.ticketmarche.com, Raya stores, and Manoucheh restaurants. Prices start from LE250 up to LE3,000. Although many people see the tickets as too expensive, Assem Al-Sheikh, head of the organising company Creative Design, expects a sold out arena, as he told the press. "Many people bought tickets from outside Egypt like Jordan and other Arab countries," Al-Sheikh said. "It's impressive that they will only come to attend the show, then leave."

Audiences will get the opportunity to see superstars like World Heavyweight Champion Sheamus, Intercontinental champion The Miz, Dolph Ziggler, Big Show, Rey Mysterio, Alberto Del Rio, and WWE diva Natalya. "Everybody wants and is very excited to be coming to Egypt," Rhodes told the press on behalf of the WWE superstars. He promised the Egyptian WWE fans a great performance. "I'll do everything I can to give you a show you have never seen before."

For whom the cheers and boos?

SINCE the announcement of having the WWE coming to Egypt for the first time, excitement has filled the air. It is a long-awaited visit that WWE fans in Egypt have been dreaming of. Now, fans will get the chance to watch some of their favourite superstars in the ring, just metres away from them, after years of watching them on the television screen.

In the WWE world, cheering and booing superstars has always depended on the cities they are in. John Cena, for example, would probably get cheered in states like Virginia and countries like Italy and Qatar but is most likely to get booed in states like Chicago and a country like Canada. Now as the superstars head to Cairo, which of them will get the cheers and which will get the boos?

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Rey Mysterio is, for sure, a fan favourite around the world. The masked Mexican is known for his acrobatic high-flying moves that excite the WWE universe. The biggest underdog in the business, as he was called, is a former three-time world champion, two-time intercontinental champion, and four-time tag team champion.

Mysterio was trained by his uncle, Rey Mysterio Sr, and started his pro-wrestling career at the age of 14. Since then, he has performed for organisations like Extreme Championship Wrestling (ECW), World Championship Wrestling (WCW), and ended up with the World Wrestling Entertainment. He made his debut there on 25 July 2002 in a match against Chavo Guerrero which he won. The 36-year-old superstar is now pursuing the Intercontinental championship after his return in June from a mixture of suspension and injury.

Mysterio will not be the only one to be cheered in the Egyptian capital as Mohamed Zaher, 21, told the Weekly. "Sheamus, too, is a man I'm so anxious to see," he said. "Since Sheamus turned face (good-guy character) he has been very interesting and entertaining especially on the microphone," Zaher added.

The current world champion, Sheamus is the first ever Irish-born WWE champion in history. He debuted in WWE in 2009 and it took him only six months to win his first WWE championship. He went on to have a successful career since then winning several titles including the WWE championship, world heavyweight championship, United States championship, and King of the Ring. His current title reign started on 1 April when he defeated Daniel Bryan for the title at Wrestlemania.

Mysterio and Sheamus, though, are not the only wrestlers on the tour who ever held a world championship. Dolph Ziggler, The Miz, and Big Show have also held several championships including the WWE and the world heavyweight title. Still, all three might get booed as they enter the arena according to 17-year-old Hani Hassan. "Their heel (evil) characters are made to be hated," he said. "However, The Miz is very good at getting a reaction out of the fans and that's what is important to him," he added.

Miz is a former WWE champion and the current Intercontinental champion. He refers to himself as "Awesome" and is known for his incredible microphone skills. The former reality television star has held almost every title in the WWE today.

On the other hand, Ziggler is the current holder of the "Money in the Bank" briefcase which contains a world title contract to cash in whenever he wants and wherever he wants within a year. He had won it back in July at the "Money in the Bank" pay-per-view. However, if he cashes in the contract to become a world champion, it wouldn't be his first. Ziggler is a former world champion, intercontinental champion, and United States champion.

Speaking of winning titles, Big Show has held many of them through his extended career in the WWE. The 40-year-old veteran has been in the business for 17 years and has held several titles. He was the first superstar in history to ever hold the WWE championship, world heavyweight championship, and the ECW championship. Egyptian fans will finally get the chance to see the 7 foot, 441 pound giant face to face.

Fans will also get to see the beautiful divas (women division) of the wrestling business. "Those are the ones who deserve our cheers," said the 23-year-old Ahmed Salah followed by a giggle. The young man told the Weekly that he doesn't expect that there will be a "good" divas' match though added he was still very happy to be able to see the divas in the ring. "Whenever there are women fighting it is fun," he said. "And as they say 'WWE divas are athletic, beautiful, and talented!' Well, not so much the last one," he added.

From the divas division, it has been announced that Natalya will be coming on the tour. Natalya is a former divas champion and a third generation wrestler. Being part of a famous wrestling family, the Harts, she inherited the business and was trained at "The Hart family Dungeon". She is the daughter of Jim "The Anvil" Neidhart and the granddaughter of Stu Hart, two former wrestlers. Also, she is the niece of the famous Bret "The Hitman" Hart who was one of the biggest superstars of the 1980s and 1990s era and a WWE Hall of Famer.

Salah might get his wish to see Natalya competing in the ring though it hasn't been announced yet if another diva will be present. Nonetheless, Salah would not mind what happens then. "Anyway, we will cheer and boo and make our voices heard the very moment the show starts," he said. "We will show the WWE how Egyptians can create an exciting atmosphere."

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April 2012 Select



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