

# on the MOVIE

## Professional Wrestling

**WF** The controversy isn't fake

It's a proven formula in professional wrestling: Sell prearranged matches as being real, and let the viewers argue over their authenticity.

In fact, when wrestler Owen Hart fell from the rafters in a botched stunt and died last May 23 in Kansas City, many at sold-out Kemper Arena reportedly thought the tragedy was a put-on.

What is very real is the foul language, sexual overtones and promotion of violence that stretch the limits of good taste but produce gigantic television ratings.

A May 16, 1999, *U.S. News and World Report* article described a popular Monday-night wrestling show, "Raw is War," as "filled with lewdness, simulated sex, prostitutes and profanities."

The article cited an Indiana University study of 50 "Raw" episodes that "reported 1,658 instances of grabbing or pointing to one's crotch, 157 instances of an obscene finger gesture, 128 episodes of simulated sexual activity, and 21 references to urination."

It's this kind of activity that has made Bryan Asposito begin to sour on the World Wrestling Federation and its promoter, Vince McMahon Jr.

"They're swearing constantly and girls in bikinis are running around. I just stopped liking it," said Bryan, 14, a parishioner at St. James Church in Irondequoit.

Not everyone agrees with Bryan, apparently. According to the *U.S. News* story, WWF's "Raw" was the No. 1-rated show on cable television. Overall, wrestling shows by WWF and its main competitor, World Championship Wrestling, fill 15 hours of weekly air

time and draw 35 million viewers.

Bryan said that he prefers the slightly milder WCW with such stars as Diamond Dallas Page, Hulk Hogan, Sting, Kevin Nash and Goldberg. Marie Peterson, 16, said she favors WWF because it's more violent. Her favorite wrestler is The Rock.

"He's got an attitude. I love it," said Marie, 16, from St. Patrick's Church in Seneca Falls.

Story by Mike Latona

Photos by Mike Mergen



with Bryan — said he's OK with his son's viewing habits as long as he doesn't take wrestling too seriously.

"At times it's a little overdone.

As long as the people support it, it'll get wilder and wilder," David Asposito said. "My concern has been, 'Does (Bryan) realize this is put on as a show?' If you hit somebody with a chair (for real), believe me, they're not going to get up."

Marie said that parents who disapprove of professional wrestling are hopefully practicing what they preach.

"You can't say 'You can't watch this TV show because there's swearing' and then go around the house using that language," Marie said.

Marie's mother asserted that professional wrestling isn't necessarily worse than other diversions available to youngsters.

"It's rough and tumble, but it's entertainment. GI Joe is violent. Soap operas have sex," said Kitty Peterson, who is youth minister at St. Patrick's. "I want the kids to enjoy wrestling. But I also want them to realize this is not a lifestyle to emulate, like crotch-grabbing."

Joe currently competes in scholastic wrestling. He said that many boys who joined last year's squad were influenced by professional wrestling — but hit the highway when they found that amateur wrestling is grueling, not a showy production.

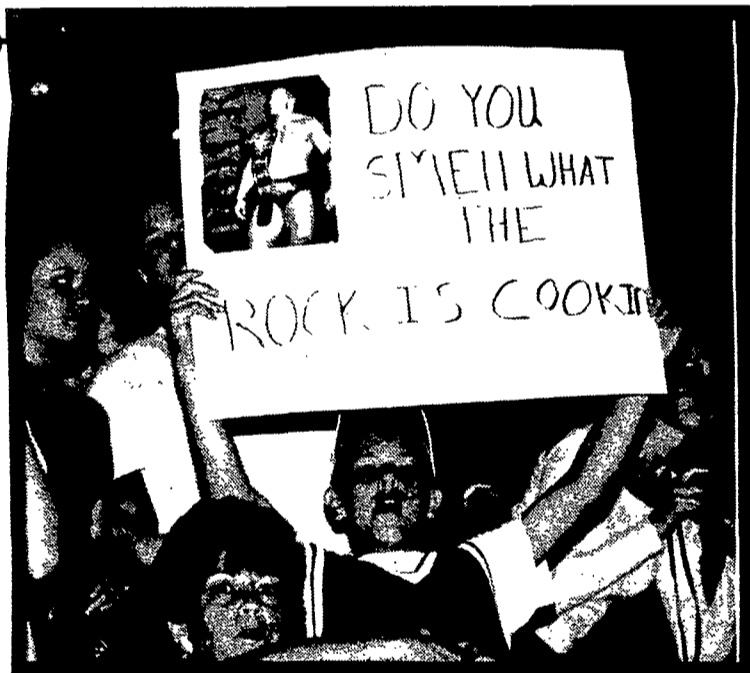
"Half of them quit after Christmas break," Joe said. He plans to wrestle again this year for Gates-Chili Middle School, where he's beginning eighth grade.

Joe said that few amateur wrestling moves are ever seen in professional wrestling. He also noted that amateur wrestling is available to participants of all sizes, as opposed to the musclebound giants who dominate professional wrestling.

Joe noted that professional wrestling matches are often "disrupted" by wrestlers jumping into the ring to defend their "friends." Such activity is not the case in scholastic wrestling, he said.

"You're wrestling with your team around you, but they're not going to go out and smash guys with a chair when you're in trouble," Joe said.

**COMING NEXT WEEK**  
**Eating habits**



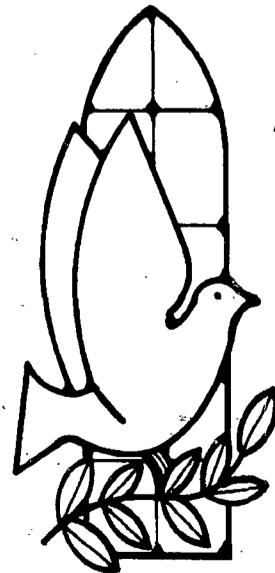
Top photo, "The Rock" slams WWF Champion "HHH" Sept. 4 at Rochester's Blue Cross Arena. Above, Alex Plumadore raises a sign in support of "The Rock" with his mom Linda, at his right, watching the action.

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