



WHY **PRO-WRESTLERS** ARE THE NOBLEST PERFORMERS

NOVO MANZOOR

It's a phase kids everywhere go through, after discovering pro-wrestling. Some of them become our idols. We memorise the theme songs of our favourites. We come to hate the villains and get confused when they turn allegiances around. We try the wrestling moves on our siblings and cousins, and inevitably get a stern talking-to after botching a move.

Then, for most, there comes an awakening. It's not real?! We try to rationalise it. It can't be true. Jeff Hardy injured himself falling from a ladder. We have even seen lots of wrestlers bleed on-screen, right?

Slowly, acceptance sets in. The cheesiness of the whole affair, the scripted action, the predictability confirms that it is a scripted product. We grow older. We stop following wrestlers.

But, should pro-wrestlers receive no respect just because they follow a script?

Think about it. They still

take really heavy hits week-in, week-out. Wrestlers are trained to do their moves safely, but there is no way to perform something like a diving headbutt without getting hurt a little. Slip ups occur all the time. Season-ending, even career-ending injuries are extremely common. Even

accidental deaths have been known to happen. Also, there is no good way of getting a face-full of Rikishi's backside.

Following the script while taking chair shots to the head is no mean feat. Also, the script does not always make things easier. Often, the scripted sequence is botched and improvisations have to be made on the fly. Some of the all-time-greatest wrestling moments have been spontaneous improvisations.

The greatest wrestlers are also great actors. They learn to be good with the mic. They learn to do good video promos. They learn to do a convincing job of 'selling' the hits they take on the ring as nasty hits. Some, like The Rock and Batista, even transition to Hollywood using those skills. Wrestling, as an 'acting' gig, is actually tougher in some aspects than professional theatre. A theatre thespian doesn't have to deliver lines after getting body-slammed from the ring to the floor.

The wrestlers have to practice and polish their craft while taking care of their physique. Ask any bodybuilder, and you will get to know how tough it is to get into that kind of shape. Along with that kind of effort, they have to practice the wrestling side of things.

Wrestlers don't just wrestle all the time; they do a lot of stuff for the entertainment of the audience. Often, these

things are outside their comfort zone. Wrestlers sing, dance, take part in comedy skits and do all sorts of other tasks without breaking character. And all of that while wearing undies in public.

Building a career in pro-wrestling is also extremely difficult. Working one's way up the ladder, while switching from one organisation to another; deciding on a gimmick and persona that will stick – all this is much harder than it sounds.

Pro-wrestlers overcome all this adversity in order to join the big leagues – just to entertain us. They might be 'fake', they might not be the modern gladiators we want them to be...but does it really matter? They are performers of the highest order, worthy of respect.

Maybe being 'fake' is not the worst thing in the world.

Novo Manzoor is an athlete. He surfs the web all day. You can reach him at: novo_manzoor@yahoo.com

