Written by Ozaukee Press
Wednesday, 27 July 2011 19:23

That's pro wrestling, folks, and it's coming to the Ozaukee County Fair, thanks to David Herro of Grafton, a one-time real wrestler who is now a wrestling promoter

David Herro of Grafton was only 6 when he went to his first World Wrestling Federation match with his father Lew at the MECCA in Milwaukee.

"It was Mad Dog Vachon vs. the Crusher. I hated it. It was loud and noisy," he remembered.

A few years later, Herro saw his first wrestling show with all the hype on cable television and he was hooked.

"I loved it. There were good guys and bad guys, and you could cheer for the good guys and boo the bad ones," Herro said. "Iron Sheik had just won the championship and people hated him. Ironically, 20 years later, I was doing a show with Mad Dog and the Crusher."

Herro wrestled four years at Grafton High School. He excelled at the amateur sport, but it was the theatrics surrounding the World Wrestling Federation, World Championship Wrestling and other professional wrestling events that he really loved.

"I've always been into the theatrics — good vs. evil," he said. "I love the story lines. That's my creative outlet."

Herro, now 39 and a wrestling promoter and radio talk show host, will bring those theatrics to the Ozaukee County Fair on Thursday, Aug. 4.

Great Lakes Championship Wrestling, which will start at 7:30 p.m., will feature Al Snow, Scotty 2 Hotty, tag teams Road Dogg Jesse James and Billy Gunn vs. Psychotic Rage, Traci Brooks and Cairo vs. Melanie Cruise and Justin James and other wrestlers. Some of themappear on Impact Wrestling on the Spike cable channel.

At 6-feet 5-inches, 320 pounds, Herro looks like a wrestler. He used to get in the ring, but prefers developing the routines.

His son Kal, 9, however, loves being in the ring. Scotty 2 Hotty, who is known for doing the worm across the mat during matches, sometimes grabs Kal and has him do the maneuver.

“When he brings Kal into the ring, the crowd goes nuts,” said Herro, a single father.

Kal is wrestling smart, his father said.

“He’ll give me ideas of what we should do in a match or to have this guy wrestle that guy,” Herro said. “He’ll suggest ways to end the match. For only being 9, he’s very smart to the wrestling world.”

Because the Ozaukee County Agricultural Society, which sponsors the fair, has a tight budget and was uncertain how big a draw wrestling would be, Herro is footing the bill for the show.

He’s hoping to break even after paying the wrestlers, referees and other expenses, including GLWC championship belts. The winners get to wear them in the ring, but then have to return them.

“This will be a casual audience,” Herro said. “They’re going to want to try to see where it’s fake, where the magic is. Everyone says it’s fake, but you can’t fake gravity.

“You learn to tuck your chin and put your arms out, but sometimes you don’t tuck your chin and your head bounces a few times on the mat.”

The mat is only an inch thick with canvas over it, Herro said.

“The average wrestler is 6 feet, 250 pounds. When you lift somebody up, they’re falling three to six feet to the ground when they get slammed. You try to make it look as good as you can, but sometimes it’s too close,” he said.

While still in high school, Herro told everyone he intended to go into pro wrestling, but his father and mother Debbie insisted he get a degree. He attended the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, then transferred to Milwaukee Area Technical College and obtained an associate degree in business.

While attending school, Herro managed a sports store in Milwaukee and added pro-wrestling gear.

Wanting to promote sales, Herro contacted World Championship Wrestling to request a wrestler come to his store and sign autographs, as Green Bay Packers and Milwaukee Brewers players did.

They agreed if he provided a live radio feed to promote their show.

Not only did Herro promote the show, but he also got into the ring with one of the wrestlers.

“Being on the radio, I couldn’t be the bad guy, but I also couldn’t beat the pro, so I came up with the idea that I would get hit with a chair and lose,” he said.

Herro said he it hurt “a little bit” when the wood chair, which was not fake, was slammed on his head.

“It was loud. I remember touching my head which was wet with sweat and thinking, ‘I hope that’s not blood,’” Herro said.

“My parents were in the audience and they were not pleased. My dad was waiting for me backstage and fuming,‘Your mother ...’

“I said, ‘Did it sound good?’ and he just shook his head. My parents thought I was crazy at first, but now they totally support what I do.”

When he wrestled in other communities, he could be the bad guy, Herro said.

From 2000 to 2004, Herro decided it was time to grow up and took a job in the business world. He stepped away from wrestling entirely, except to watch it on TV.

But he wasn’t happy. When the Crusher died, he was asked to put together a show to benefit his family.

That’s all it took.

His biggest local event is the Blizzard Blast, which will be Dec. 3 in Waukesha. It draws more than 200 wrestlers and 1,500 to 2,000 fans. The Blizzard Blatz was held at Grafton High School until a bigger venue was needed.

“Wrestling fans are as loyal as Packer fans. People come from throughout the United States,” Herro said. “Wrestlers and fans are one big family.”

Herro said he’s worked with the top wrestlers and nicest people in the field.

“I was very fortunate. I got to live my childhood dream. How many people can say that?” Herro said.

“I would probably be out of it by now if it wasn’t for my son. He loves it so much, and it’s fun again seeing it through his eyes.”

Kal must finish college before any of his pro wrestling friends will train him, Herro said.

The smart wrestlers, he said, have something to fall back on.

Herro’s day job is manager and cook for Serenity Homes of Grafton, an assisted-living facility owned by his father.

If it’s not too hot, some residents will attend the wrestling show at the fair.

Herro also has a weekly talk show, “Pro Wrestling Report,” from 10 p.m. to midnight Mondays on ESPN radio 540 AM and a one-hour interactive Internet show at www.PWRshow.com.

“It’s important to me that the show is family friendly,” Herro. “My son obviously is going to be there and so are my parents. I don’t want to embarrass them or me.

“When you come to my events, you can meet the wrestlers, shake hands and get their autographs. That’s what people are really paying for.”

The kids in the audience will be invited backstage, Herro said.

“Kal has been fortunate that he always goes backstage,” he said. “We want other kids to have that experience.”

Tickets are $30 for the first row and pre-show meet and greet, $20 for the second row and pre-show meet and greet and $10 for general seating. Children ages 5 and younger will be admitted free for general seating.

Tickets may be ordered through www.blizardbrawl.com.

To learn what a wrestler would feed his grandparents and his son, turn to the recipe page in this section.