

STREET SCENE

Perfect timing

David Hirsh knows he has some big shoes to fill, but the former Birmingham-West Bloomfield resident knows he's up to the challenge of entertaining today's rocking 'n' rolling teenagers. Find out about the new Mr. American Bandstand on Page 3D.

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Whether it's Madison Square Garden or Wayne County Fairgrounds, professional wrestling draws the same reaction.

small time WRESTLING

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

"No Hulkster or Andre the Giant. No multi-colored light shows. This can't be professional wrestling as seen on television, can it?"

Hock no. This is "rassling." Sorry, no Piper's Pit, but there is a Porta John. No smokey haze, either. Just the dust from the dirt of field. Putrid cigar smell is replaced by the fragrance of cow manure.

Where there's no Mean Gene or Jesse the Body, there's Ken from Zak's Video. ("Could you mention us in your story?" asked Ken, holding a camera at ringside.)

Wayne County Fairgrounds is not exactly Madison Square Garden, more like Farmer Fred's Garden. But when the bell rings, it's no holds barred.

On this night, Midwest All-Pro Wrestling is presenting a card with the likes of the Flying Tigers, the Riot Squad, Rick O'Toole, Cowboy Woody Lee, Irish Mickey Doyle and, yes, the legend from Benton Harbor, the man who chased the original Ayatollah of the Motorcity, The Sheik, across the country — Bobo Brazil.

The crowd is a mixture of hardcore wrestling fans and fairgoers who took a wrong turn from the midway.

"BITE 'EM, bite 'em!," screams a young girl as Cowboy Woody Lee

seems to have his hands full with Rick O'Toole.

"Everytime they see it on TV, they get like this," said her mother, shaking her head.

This is a scaled down version from the World Wrestling Federation (WWF) or the National Wrestling Alliance (NWA). The reaction, though, it draws from the audience is apparently the same.

Otherwise the guy who emerges from the van in his dark red trunks and boots would hang up the wrestling trunks. But Bobo Brazil is still going strong.

Through the '60s, '60s, '70s and early '80s, Bobo Brazil chased a Middle East nemesis through the East, South, Midwest and West. Bout between The Sheik and Bobo used to regularly draw sellout crowds at Cobo Arena.

"The Sheik was a very, very mean man," said Bobo, with a furrowed brow of seriousness. "You had to keep your eyes on him at all time."

The Sheik has since folded his turban, but Bobo goes "Cocobuttin'" along. He limits his wrestling to three nights a week, recently turning down a trip to Japan.

"I'm afraid of those planes; the damn things keep crashing," he said.

Those from Bobo's era seem to be either dead or retired.

• Pampero Firpo: "He's retired and living in San Jose."

• Johnny Valentine: "He's living in Texas. He was badly hurt in a

plane crash."

• BULL CURRY: "He passed away about two years ago. I'm not sure what he died from. I think it was a heart attack."

• Cowboy Tex McKenzie: "He's retired and living in Wyoming."

• The Mighty Igor: "I think he's retired."

• Luls Martinez: "I don't know what Louie's been up to."

• Lord Athal Layton: "He passed away, too."

• The Sheik: "I don't know where the hell he's living."

OK, so much for old acquaintances. The recent boom in professional wrestling, especially on television, has given guys like Bobo Brazil "a piece of the action."

In his prime, he made around \$250,000 a year. The take is considerably less, today.

"I wrestled all my life. I saved some money," he said. "Wrestling has been very good to me. I love it. I wrestle just as hard at places like this as I did at Madison Square Garden, Joe Louis Arena or Cobo Arena."

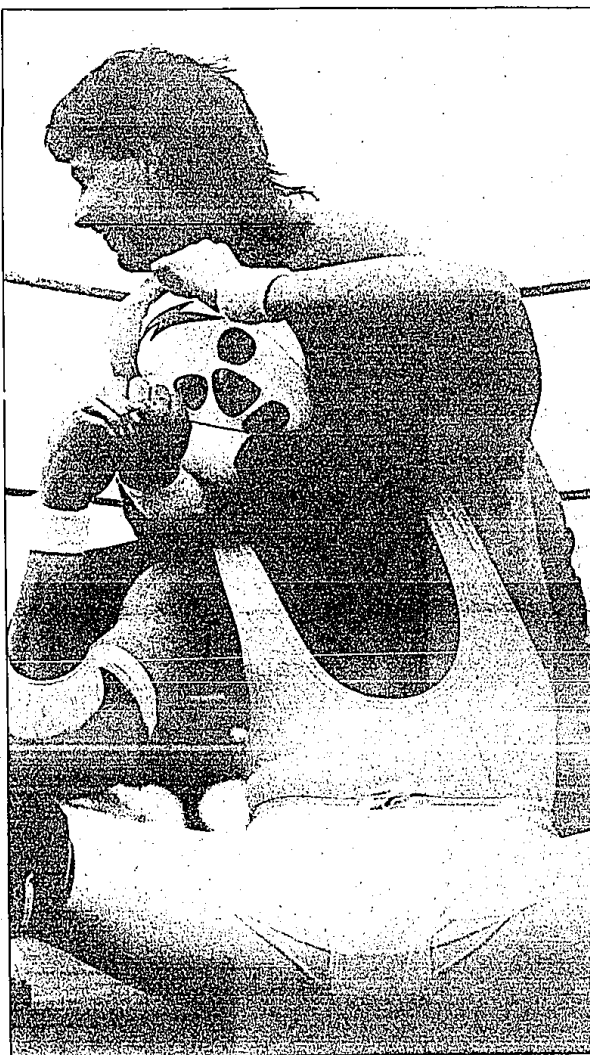
Behind Bobo is a man who was once on the receiving end of one of his "Cocobutts" (a "Cocobutt" is performed when Bobo smashes his forehead into an opponent's melon).

Johnny Storm, who makes up one-half of the tag-team The Flying Tigers, went against Brazil in only the third match of his career.

Please turn to Page 4

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— Bobo Brazil



photos by SHARON LaMIEUX/staff photographer

Mr. Fantastic Al Snow appears to have White Lightning right where he wants him in a recent bout at Wayne County Fairgrounds.

Warp Factor

Karlous Barney



"Ayo, it's Long John Silver alright... and the missing manhole cover!"

MMA has tradition and great location

By Iris Sanderson Jones
contributing travel editor

Q: My Dad was in the Marines and he wants me to go to military school. He says it's my choice, so I want to look into it. I am a good student, entering 11th grade this fall, and I have a year to make up my mind. Since you've written about south Texas, maybe you know something about the Marine Military Academy there?

A: I met a couple of Michigan students when I visited the Marine Military Academy (MMA) on a tour of the Rio Grande Valley last winter. It's in Harlingen, Texas, on the border of Mexico. Parents go to Harlingen to visit the Confederate Air Force Museum and to see the daily noon parade at the academy.

The Academy's landmark is the Iwo Jima Monument, a 90-foot-high Marine memorial, showing four Marines raising the U.S. flag over Iwo Jima during World War II. The original bronze statue is in Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C.

Sculptor Felix de Weldon gave his original molds to the Marine Academy because MMA is apparently the only private non-profit school in the world that is patterned after the spirit and tradition of the U.S. Marines. And for another good reason that might interest you — a nice warm climate.

There are 380 cadets in grades nine through 12 and in one post-graduate year at the academy. A high percentage go on to either the U.S. Naval Academy or another good college of their choice.

Those are just statistics. For the real scoop, listen to Chad McComb of Battle Creek, who left Penfield High School at the end of his sophomore year to go to the Marine Military Academy in Harlingen.

"My parents read an article about the academy and I decided to try a two-week summer school program here. It was pretty rough, all discipline. I decided to sign up anyway, and found the regular school year was not as tough as summer school."

Please turn to Page 4



MICKY JONES

A landmark at the Marine Military Academy in Harlingen, Texas, is the Iwo Jima Monument, a 90-foot-high Marine memorial.