

D&B REPORTS

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Arm wrestling enters 20th century—at last

People have probably been arm wrestling since opposing thumbs first appeared on human hands. But until now, there were things about the sport that made the playing field, so to speak, uneven. Lefties couldn't wrestle righties, the guy with the longer arm had an advantage in leverage, and there was always the problem of the tricky grip.

Enter Jack Barringer, a man with a better idea: the World Class Arm Wrestling Machine.

Barringer has brought technology to what must surely be the most basic of all competitive sports. He has perfected a machine that eliminates unfair advantages between opponents by having them wrestle each other via connecting levers linked by a steel bar. Barringer says his system has proved hugely popular in local bars, VFW halls and shopping centers. Naturally, he's franchising the idea.

Improving on nature

Barringer, whose World Class Events Corp. is located in Ames, Iowa, describes himself as a promoter. Back in 1978 he began promoting arm-wrestling competitions. The tournaments proved popular, but Barringer, sensitive to the inherent problems of arm wrestling, kept thinking of ways to improve the sport. The World Class Arm Wrestling Machine was what he came up with.

With Barringer's machine, arm wrestling remains *mano a mano*—although mixed doubles are proving popular. Competitors wrestle each other, not the machine, by grabbing hold of rubber grips rather than one another's hands. With the machine's adjustable elbow pads, there is no advantage in leverage to a contestant with longer arms. A transmission mechanism in the machine allows lefties and righties to arm wrestle each other—for the first time in recorded history.

The machine announces winners in grand style, with police sirens and alarms and flashing lights. It's a "psychological



Coming to grips with a new technology

reward" for winning, says Barringer.

Going big time

There will soon be other kinds of rewards for winning. Barringer is already setting up a series of state and local championships and expects to hold the first national championship in Las Vegas next year. The possibility of a world championship in 1989 is also being explored.

Barringer sees the idea of franchising his machine as the equivalent of allowing the average person to buy a sports franchise. At \$25,000 for a protected territory of ½ million, an arm-wrestling franchise is a lot cheaper than buying into the NBA.

In Barringer's view, there is also a lucrative short-term potential in promoting

the arm-wrestling machine as a "traffic builder" in places like shopping centers. Recently, in fact, an automobile dealer called him to arrange a weekend tournament on his lot. The dealer was running a sale on trucks, and he figured that the kind of people who buy trucks—big guys—would be lured to his dealership by the chance to prove themselves at arm wrestling. It worked.

Barringer reports that interest from potential buyers has been strong since he began offering exclusive franchises for the World Class Arm Wrestling Machine in January. Franchisees, he says, are getting in at the beginning of an up-and-coming sport. His company, says Barringer, provides the marketing and the pizzazz. ■

Offbeat marketing