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Franchise News

Man Wrestles Machine

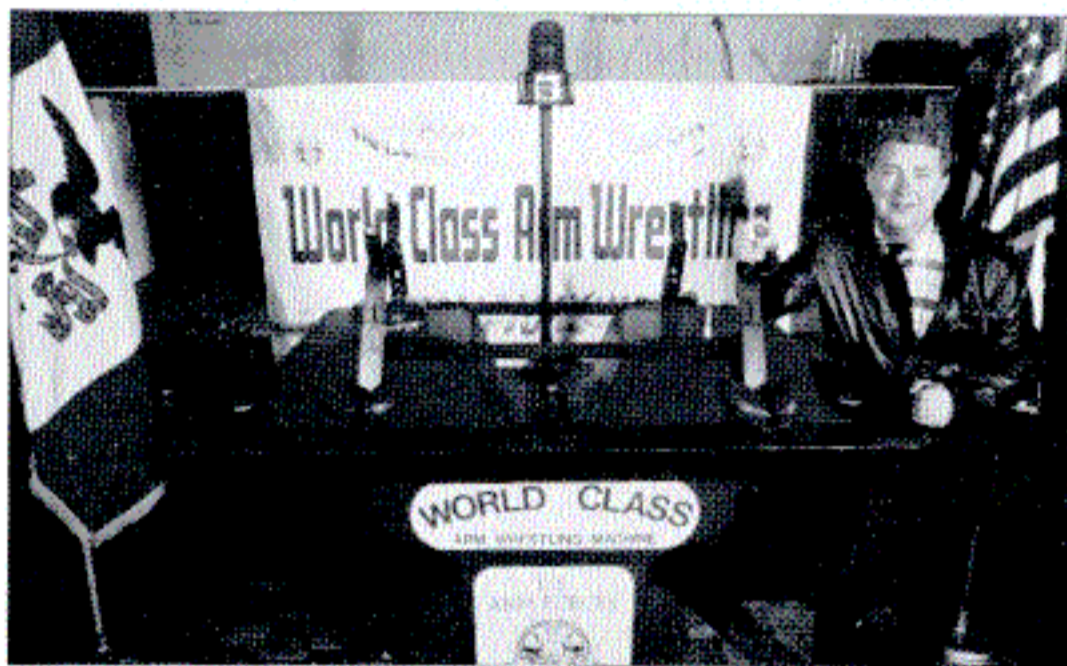
If you're an arm wrestling enthusiast with a bad grip or a short arm, you're in luck. If you're left-handed and tired of only being able to wrestle left-handers, brighter days are coming. Thanks to Jack Barringer's WORLD CLASS ARM WRESTLING MACHINE, the sport of arm wrestling is now accessible to all competitors, rather than just strong, long-armed right-handers.

Using the machine, which allows for singles or doubles competition, competitors grab onto rubber handles instead of each others' hands, eliminating unfair grip advantages. Elbow pads can be adjusted so that each competitor, no matter how short his arm is, has a fair chance. A built-in transmission allows lefties to wrestle right-handed people, something that has been impossible until now. These features as well as the novelty of the machine itself make for fairer competitions—and a great deal of fun.

They also make a great deal of money for Barringer, who's spent the last few months traveling all over the world promoting the World Class Arm Wrestling Machine and selling franchises. In his first four months, Barringer's sold over 35 franchises in America alone. A trip to Europe landed him a guest spot on London's most popular show, *Tomorrow's World*, after which he sold the marketing rights for Great Britain.

According to Barringer, the idea for the machine developed naturally out of his job as a sports promoter and his lifelong interest in arm wrestling. "About three-and-a-half years ago," Barringer explains, "I said to myself, 'If I could make arm wrestling perfect, what would I come up with?' I looked at all the problems with the sport and decided to build a machine that would [eliminate] all the controversy and make it good, clean fun."

Barringer called together experts in cabinet making, electronics, and mechanical engineering, among others. Three-and-a-half years and \$350,000 dollars in prototypes and investments



Jack Barringer and his World Class Arm Wrestling Machine attract crowds wherever they go. The machine makes the sport of arm wrestling accessible to everyone—and makes surprising profits for franchisees.

later, Barringer and company came up with the World Class Arm Wrestling Machine. "It's been a phenomenal success," he says.

Franchisees pay a \$25,000 franchise fee that allows them the right to market the machine in a restricted geographical area. They receive all the equipment and training necessary to promote and hold arm wrestling tournaments as well as advice on how to secure media coverage and get sponsors. Franchisees pay a \$50 royalty for each tournament they hold.

Arm wrestling tournaments are organized at local bars, health clubs, YMCAs, legion halls, and other gathering places. The franchisor charges \$275 to \$350 for each tournament as well as an entry fee of \$10 from each contestant. With tournament entrants sometimes numbering into the hundreds, the profit potential for both the franchisee and the host organization is quite promising. Local companies sometimes donate prizes or trophies, and promotional items such as hats and T-shirts also enhance the appeal of an arm wrestling tournament.

"We pack them in," says Barringer. "Standing room only. That's why our franchises are going so fast. We don't give any big sales pitches; we say, 'Go attend a tournament.' Our nickname is

The Traffic Builders. We draw traffic for shopping centers, health clubs, bars, places like that."

World Class Arm Wrestling is popular nationwide. Because he is based in Iowa, Barringer has sold the majority of his franchises in the Midwest, but has franchisees as far east as New Jersey and as far west as San Francisco. A series of regional and state championships will yield winners who will compete in a national competition this year in Las Vegas. Plans are in the works to market the machine in New Zealand, Japan, and Australia. "They're very macho down there," Barringer says.

Media response to the World Class Arm Wrestling Machine has been good; it's been covered in such publications as *The Chicago Tribune* and *Dun and Bradstreet's Reports*. It will be featured in an episode of the upcoming T.V. series *The New Monkees*. Barringer has also been contacted by two production companies that plan to use the arm wrestling machines and logo in their films.

"The key to our success is that we do not treat this thing as a machine," Barringer says. "We treat it as a sport. And it's a heck of a lot of fun." ■

World Class Arm Wrestling Machine, P.O. Box 882, Ames, IA 50010, (515) 292-9508.