

Fitness & Recreation

New grip on arm-wrestling

While Sylvester Stallone is grossing millions with his new movie "Over the Top" about an arm wrestling truck driver, 43-year-old Jack Barringer of Ames, Iowa, is building a worldwide franchise business and breeding a major new sport with his patented World Class Arm Wrestling Machine.

The inventor and entrepreneur has perfected a machine that takes the controversy out of traditional hand-to-hand arm wrestling by eliminating special techniques. The competitors use only their strength, not fancy hand grips. And no one has an advantage because of arm length.

Moreover, the machine can pit left-handers against right-handers and it accommodates two teams of two.

The contestants simply stand on either side of the machine, grab one of the four levers, and the battle begins. The levers connect the competitors along a steel bar through the middle of the machine so they are still wrestling each other, not the machine. A flashing red light and bell announce the winner.

Barringer, president of World Class Events Corp., now is granting franchise rights to the sport using the Arm Wrestling Machine in a specific geographical area. For \$10,000, the company will provide the use of one of the machines in an exclusive territory of roughly half a million people, and the training



SKOKIE'S LARRY Geiser demonstrates use of the Arm Wrestling Machine during competition last week at The Levee. (Photo by Stephen Carrera)

necessary to organize tournaments in bars, health clubs, shopping centers, YMCAs, Legion halls and universities.

The franchise holder charges \$275 to \$350 for each tournament, collects \$10 from each contestant and works with beer and pop companies to provide awards, prizes and promotional help. He also earns income from selling accessories such as T-shirts and caps.

In return, the businesses and sponsors profit from the increased traffic coming through the door.

"We call ourselves the traffic builders," Barringer says. When a person signs up for a tournament, they usually bring along four or five friends to cheer them on and share the thrill of combat.

"All of a sudden, you have a wild, enthusiastic crowd," he says.

As for the wrestlers, they compete for prizes and trophies and the chance to move up to regional, state and national competition, all organized by World Class Events.

During the first 45 days after the machine was ready to go, Barringer sold four franchises — one each in Alabama, Illinois, Wisconsin and New Jersey. Because of the growing popularity of arm wrestling, the advantages of Barringer's machine and the response to Stallone's movie, Barringer is predicting he will sell 40 to 80 more franchises during the next 12 months and 350 after 36 months in the United States alone.

At the same time, he is pursuing international markets in Germany, Japan, Australia, the United Kingdom and Canada. In Japan alone, "Over the Top" grossed \$20 million its first two weeks, Barringer says, making it a ripe market for the World Class Arm Wrestling Machine.

"We treat our business strictly as a sport," Barringer says. "No one had taken time to organize this thing before.

"We are the gurus of the business," he says, "and we're going to put arm wrestling on the map."



THE WORLD CLASS Arm Wrestling Machine was utilized during recent World Class competition at The Levee on West Fullerton. Here, Schaumburg's Jim

Jensen teams up with Brad Johnson to compete against another duo. (Photo by Stephen Carrera)