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## You Gotta Hand It to Him

Arm wrestling. Isn't it the domain of beer-guzzling, macho motorcycle gangs?

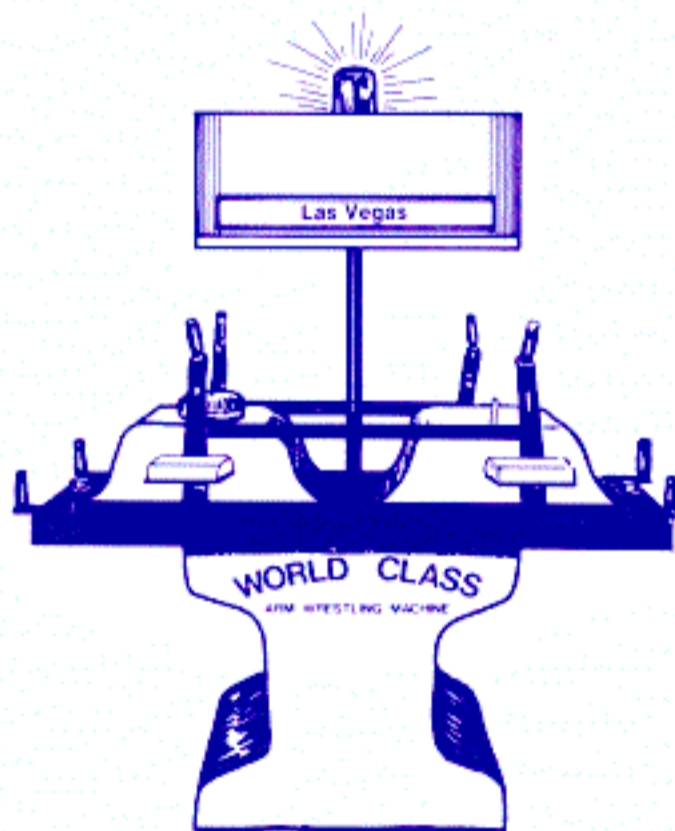
No. Recently the sport has become respectable, thanks to its prominence in Sylvester Stallone's latest movie, *Over the Top*, and to Jack Barringer, a long-time sports promoter who has created an arm-wrestling machine that eliminates injuries and makes the sport fair to all contestants.

After asking himself what he could do to make arm wrestling perfect, Barringer spent 3½ years and \$350,000 developing the World Class Arm Wrestling Machine.

After all, the sport has always sparked controversy, Barringer says. Traditionally contestants dug their fingernails into their opponents' hands, twisted and broke their arms, or used a free hand to grip under the table for unfair leverage. Right-handed players never played lefties, and those with long arms had an advantage. Furthermore, it was sometimes difficult to determine the rightful winner.

Barringer's machine eliminates these problems. Connecting "handlebars" are gripped instead of opponents' hands, elbow cushions provide comfort, and tabletop grips enable players to watch their opponents' free hands. When someone scores a win, lights flash and a police siren and bells sound. And because each machine has four handlebars, team play and mixed doubles are now possible.

Instead of relegating his machine to bars or beside vending machines, Barringer has taken his invention one step



further: He has begun selling franchises that demonstrate how to launch World Class Arm Wrestling tournaments nationwide. Already 36 franchises have been sold at \$25,000 apiece. Barringer expects there to be at least 80 in operation by the end of the year. Franchisees make money by charging host establishments about \$400 per tournament and contestants \$10 entry fees.

Dann Niven is pleased with Hands Down Promotions, the Chicago franchise he purchased in late April. Just a few weeks after buying in he held a tournament complete with two referees, an announcer, scorekeeper, and weigh-in person; it was covered by the local TV news. Niven eventually plans to hold sanctioned tournaments for charities, during which contestants can bid for the chance to play against celebrities and members of the Chicago Bears football team.

Barringer has plans of his own. He has already organized the 1988 National Arm-Wrestling Championship in Las Vegas, and will stage world championships in the near future.

The events should be quite a spectacle. Players frequently wear 8-inch platform shoes so they can better work the machine. Many dress in unusual outfits and have their friends slap them in the face before playing to get their adrenaline going. "We like it," boasts Barringer. "It adds to the color of the event."

For further information, contact Jack Barringer, World Class Events Corp., P.O. Box 882, Ames, IA 50010, (515) 292-9508.