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Offices are located in Room 5310 on campus, 43600 Mission Blvd., Fremont 94539-5884. Call (510) 659-6075. Fax: (510) 659-6076. E-mail: monitor@ohlone.cc.ca.us

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OPINION

The sweat is real, the pain is real, wrestling is real

By **MICHAEL ABURAS**
Staff writer

Undeniably one of the biggest spectacles in the last three decades to rise from underground obscurity and into the mainstream is professional wrestling. Once restricted to side shows at carnivals, and later performed in bingo parlors, pro wrestling has finally suplexed and body slammed its way into sold-out arenas all around the globe.

But is professional wrestling fake? Yes, absolutely. The outcomes are predetermined and the characters are an act, usually. But what is fake? The dictionary defines fake as not genuine. But the heart and athleticism put into a wrestler's character and match are 100 percent real.

Are the matches predetermined? Yes, however, the viewing audience is not aware of the outcome. Has knowing the outcome of a contest ahead of time stopped anyone from watching the Raiders or 49ers lose a game this season? And, has fixing a contest stopped certain people from running a country?

Professional wrestling is theater and wrestlers are real-life superheroes who are larger than life. It's the over-the-top personalities and egos

that attract us to them. Wrestling is like an old dime store novel where you have the "Baby Face" or "Face" (the good guy, typically pretty and handsome) and the "Heel" (the bad guy and very ugly) battling each other. In case you're not aware, Heels aren't afraid to dish out low blows, as was the crotch shot in the above paragraph. It boils down to good versus evil and we all want to see how it will play out.

The current state of American society can always be observed in wrestling. Only the Reaganomics of the '80s could produce characters such as the tax man, I.R.S. Irwin R. Shyster (Heel), the Repo Man (Heel) and the tag team The Rockers (Face). I concede, however, the I.R.S. character would fit and be hated in any era. Who could forget the greatest Face of all time who emerged as a star in the '80s, Hulk Hogan.

Hogan was the perfect character for the conservative times that were the '80s. Hogan would always tell his fans, more commonly known as Hulkamaniacs, to train, take their vitamins and say their prayers, "Brother." America's values are also reflected in Hogan's theme song, Real American. "I am a real American, Fight for the rights of everyman... Well you hurt my friends, then you hurt my pride, I gotta be

a man, I can't let it slide."

It doesn't get much more American than that. The idea of sticking up for the little guy, which is what happened during the first Gulf War. The early '90s saw the U.S. go into Iraq to help protect Kuwait.

The first Gulf War manifested in the ring at Wrestlemania 7, March 24, 1991, when "The Real American" Hulk Hogan fought Sgt. Slaughter for the World Heavy Weight Title. Sgt. Slaughter, at the time, had become under the influence of the Iron Sheik (a personal bodyguard for the Shah of Iran during the '70s) and was portrayed as an Iraqi sympathizer. Slaughter even adopted a new finishing maneuver known as the Camel Clutch.

Wrestling continues to be a valid measuring stick of the social climate in America to this day. A more contemporary example of this could be observed in the characters John Cena and Mohammad Hassan.

Current champ John Cena (Face) represents white middle America. Hard working and obsessed with the hip hop culture. Cena's early character gimmick was to dis his opponents with a free style rap. During the '90s, talk show host Jenny Jones would drag out white kids dressed in hip hop attire and the audience would clown on them and accuse them of trying to be black.

However, the wrestling audience has embraced their champ, who claims to be a champion of the people. Moreover, white America has always been obsessed with black culture, since the Blues and Jazz to the present with R&B and Rap.

Mohammad Hassan (Heel) represents America's intolerance toward the Arabic culture. Hassan's gimmick was a simple one: come down to the ring, piss off the audience—that's a Heel's sole purpose—attack lower card wrestlers and go home. On April 3, 2005 at Wrestlemania 21 in Los Angeles, Hassan came down to the ring to express his indignation with the company and audience for being excluded from the biggest event of the year.

"Now everyone knows that Hollywood is filled with phonies and fakes and that Los Angeles has a long and profound history of prejudice and bigotry," said Hassan at Wrestlemania 21 after interrupting another wrestler. Leading up to the biggest event of the year, Hassan would come out to the ring and simply tell the audience that he was tired of being discriminated against because he was Arab-American. The audience reaction was the same at any arena in any state, he was raucously booed. In the words of Dave "The Red Neck" Shultz: "He

was just telling it like it is baby." Sure Hassan teased the audience a little, but, other than that he just gave his opinion and was booed for it. This is an example of America's intolerance of views that don't mesh with their own.

In addition to representing the current social state of America, wrestling also represents the cultural diversity of America more accurately than any other sport. Anyone who attends Ohlone knows how culturally diverse the college is. However, most TV shows and professional sports leagues do not reflect this.

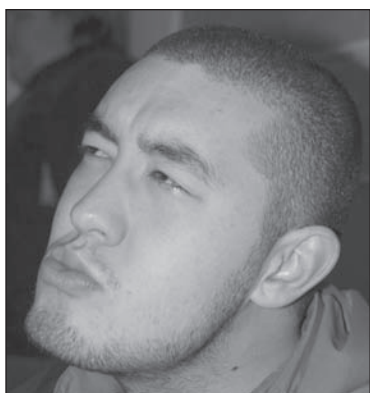
How many Punjabis do you see in major league baseball? The WWE currently has two: Davari and the Great Kali. How many Mexicans do you see starting in the NBA? Wrestlers consider winning the WWE World Heavy Weight title the equivalent of being awarded the Oscar for best actor. Two Mexicans have held this title within the last three years: Eddie Guerrero and Rey Mesterio Jr. When was the last time a Mexican won the Oscar for best actor?

But isn't it choreographed you say. Yes. No. Sort of. Moves are discussed ahead of time, however, wrestlers do lose their place, or will improvise. Wrestling is sort of like

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CAMPUS COMMENT >>>

Weirdest Christmas gift ever received?



THOMAS PATRINOS
Graphic Design

"A Fire Log. For a fireplace I've never used."



KATE FLOWER
Undecided

"Pet pigeon named 'Pumpkin'."



MARK ARSENAULT
Aerospace

"A kaleidoscope from my grandma whom I never see."



GUY FRESHWATER
Anthropology

"A thee month-old Happy Meal; my uncle ate the fries."



MATT LANGSETH
Baseball

"My grandparents donated money to another country buying a goat under my name."