

Footy stars targeted for mega pro-wrestling event



With a new professional wrestling series coming to Australia next year, Luke Guyett - also known as 'The Business' - is ready to rumble in the ring. Picture: David Caird

'So-called AFL, NRL tough guys' wanted

EXCLUSIVE
PETER ROLFE

A NEW professional Australian wrestling event inspired by global sporting empire WWE will be launched next year and organisers are setting their sights on former AFL, NRL and AFLW players to join the elite competition.

The Herald Sun can reveal "Oceania Pro Wrestling" will embark on a regional roadshow of Australia, targeting crowds of about 6000 over several nights, including multi-day drawcards earmarked for regional cities.

As well as former footballers, homegrown, international and "hall of fame" wrestlers will be targeted for

the major competition, which has ties to the US and UK.

Victorian cities in line for events - which would also include fan festivals - include Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo. Hobart, Gold Coast, Newcastle, Cairns and Wollongong have also been earmarked.

Former North Melbourne Football Club chief operating officer and Hockey and Baseball Australia chief Cam Vale is driving the series alongside professional wrestlers from the US and UK.

"They will be mega events for wrestling fans," Mr Vale said. "They will go for four or five days in major regional Australian cities that are often denied big events."

Mr Vale said a headline

"Starrcast Australia" event would be to a regional city what Bathurst is for motor-sport or Bells Beach is to surfing, boosting local economies and attracting tourists.

At least two other annual events and conventions will be staged from next year featuring international and Aussie competitors and appearances by legends of the sport.

Mr Vale said it would be a mix of major sporting and cultural events, "like a Comic-Con all rolled into four days".

"Australia and New Zealand are legitimate wrestling hotspots for both talent and fans, and we have long been starved of a major annual event," he said.

Wrestling world champion

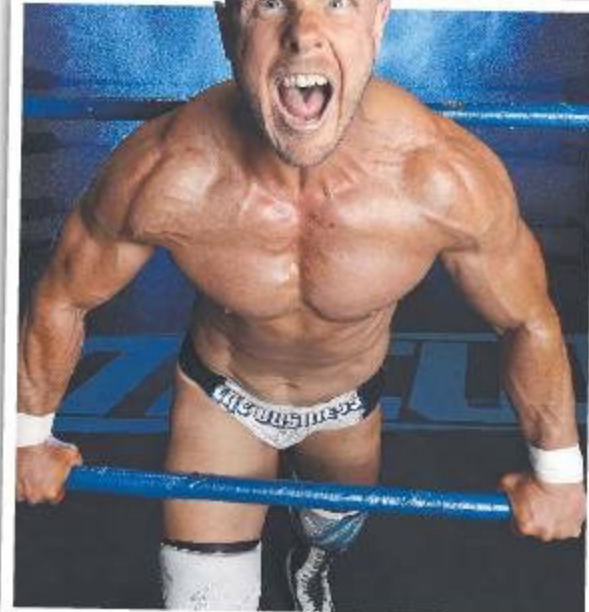
and co-executive producer Nick Aldis hoped Aussie athletes could follow in the footsteps of former NFL player Pat McAfee, now a WWE star.

"I would love to see one of those so-called tough guys of AFL or NRL - active players or retired - train up and step in the ring to challenge me in 2023 at this event," he said.

Six-time WWE World Champion Mickie James, one of the greatest female wrestlers of all time, will be executive producer of female content.

Mr Vale said a crowd of more than 72,000 at the MCG for a WWE pay-per-view event in 2018 proved how popular the sport was in Australia.

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Crown Resorts barrels toward a \$1bn loss

KYLAR LOUSSIKIAN

CROWN Resorts, the country's largest casino operator, has posted a near \$1bn loss as it sets aside some \$600m to pay for fines levied by gaming regulators in multiple states.

In its first year of private ownership, the company has posted revenues of \$1.94bn, up from the \$1.54bn in the previous financial year. But expenses have blown out from

\$1.98bn in the year to June 30, 2021, to more than \$3.09bn. That figure includes \$617m set aside for regulatory and other related matters, accounts lodged with the corporate regulator show.

The company posted a net loss of \$945.4m, compared with a \$261.3m loss in 2021.

A Crown spokeswoman said the figures reflected a "challenging environment faced by Crown during the

pandemic, with significant impact on our operations, particularly in the first half".

"During the year, Crown also navigated significant regulatory matters. These matters are ongoing, and we continue to co-operate with the relevant parties on resolutions," she said.

Crown's shareholders - including its major investor James Packer - late in May overwhelmingly approved the

\$8.9bn sale of the company to Blackstone.

The company has been beset by regulatory woes following damning findings of separate inquiries in Victoria, NSW and Western Australia, which led to a series of large fines.

The NSW inquiry last year concluded Crown was not suitable to hold a licence to operate a casino in Sydney.

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170-year coin for sale

A GOLD coin minted as part of Australia's first production run of gold coins is being offered for sale for the first time in more than a decade, with an asking price of \$750,000.

Melbourne's Coinworks is offering the uncirculated Nobleman pound, struck on September 23, 1852, at the Government Assay Office in Adelaide.



Coinworks managing director Belinda Downie said the first production run produced only about 50 coins before a crack developed in the die and as a result, fewer than 40 of the so-called Type

One pounds are thought to be in the hands of collectors. She said the coin, for sale for the first time since 2009, is "in a virtually mint state".