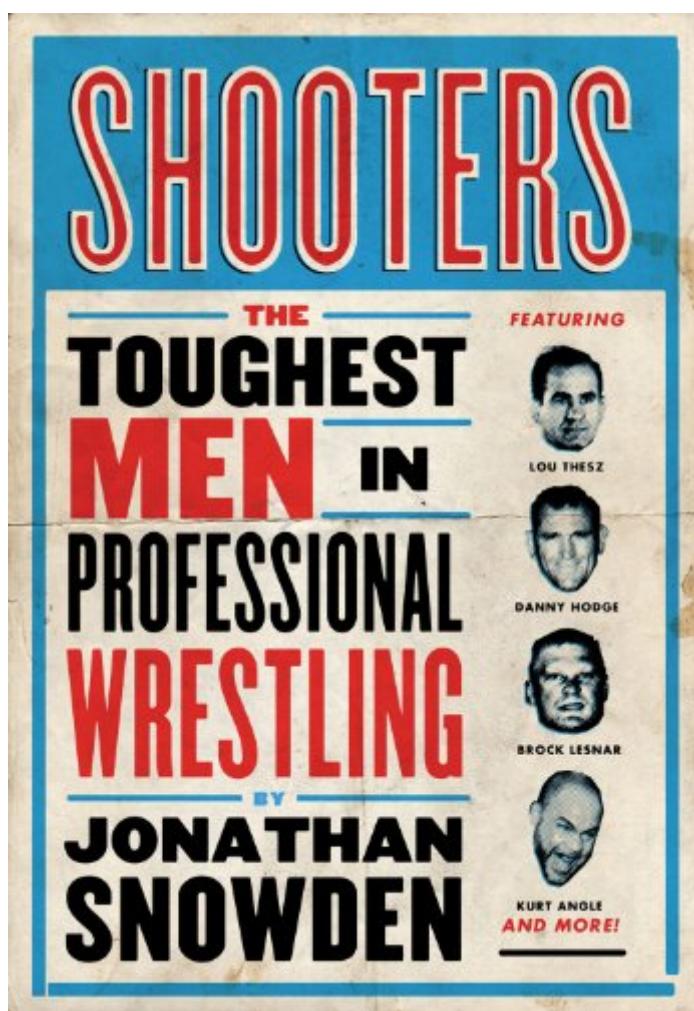


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# Shooters: The Toughest Men In Professional Wrestling



## **Synopsis**

From William Muldoon to Brock Lesnar, this history covers those who have divided themselves as tough guys on the professional wrestling circuit and legitimate confrontations. From catch wrestling master Billy Robinson to the Japanese professional wrestler who gave birth to the global phenomenon that is modern mixed martial arts (MMA), this investigation travels from the shadowy carnival tent and the dingy training hall to the bright lights of the squared circle and the Las Vegas glitz of the octagon. Billy Riley's legendary Wigan Snake Pit and the rigorous UWF Dojo in Tokyo are explored, revealing the secret history of both professional wrestling and the rising sport of MMA. Squared circle icons Strangler Lewis and Lou Thesz and Olympic heroes Danny Hodge and Kurt Angle are also featured.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

I bought this book in order to gain insight into the nature and attitudes of genuinely tough men in the professional wrestling business. The title is not an exact match for the content, however, since the book also covers other types of professional fighters, such as those in the early days of Japanese

judo and MMA fighting, with some brief forays into UFC and its rivals. In this, Snowden, who has written on these topics before, seems to be recycling some old material from prior books. Most readers will be unfamiliar with the stories of the earliest shoot wrestlers in the 19th century. This is, for me, the liveliest part of the book, because the personalities and stories are less known, and feature if anything more outlaw and maverick behavior than can be found within living memory. By mid-20th century, the book becomes an assembly of bits and pieces of research which sketch out well-selected personalities of different eras. Since I was reading for psychological insight, and did not consistently find it, I would be inclined to rate the book at three stars. However, there is some of what I was looking for, and Snowden writes well, so I have given it four stars.

Interesting but not five stars. There were some interesting stories especially about Ernie Ladd and how he handled an irate promoter when the promoter sent two enforcers to teach him a lesson. I recommend this book for people who are interested in pro wrestling BVM (Before Vince McMahon).

Johnathon Snowden, has written an excellent book for students of wrestling history, with the best and toughest, as a common thread through the story. From Farmer Burns, through Frank Gotch, George Hackensmidt, Ed Lewis, Lou Thesz, right up to the era of Kurt Angle and Brock Lesnar, some wrestlers have been talented enough to control their own destinies, in what is often a sordid industry. The pioneers realized early on that legit matches were bad for business; control of outcomes and performers was essential to ensure growth and profits. To guarantee that everyone "got with the program," and to protect the business and its secrets, promoters used the toughest, and most talented grapplers as policemen. Men like Nebraska based John "Tigerman," Peseck (a ferocious competitor who wrestled into the 1960's) filled that role for Lewis and his cronies in a 1922 match with Martin Plestina. At one point, after being on the receiving end of Peseck's brutal tactics, Plestina was heard to shout "God, please don't kill me!" The book covers the career of Thesz, and Vern Gagne who were both good enough to control when, and to whom they lost. The reader is given insight into the lives and methods of men like Karl Gotch, and British born Billy Robinson. Gotch after never really connecting in American rings, moved to Japan where his abilities as a wrestler, and trainer, led the Japanese to dub him "the god of wrestling." Robinson after a very successful wrestling career, has become a seminal influence in MMA, and a resurgence of catch wrestling. Snowden also covers the careers of Angle, and Lesnar, in some detail. Angle's winning an Olympic Gold Medal, while wrestling with a broken neck is as inspiring as his descent into addiction to pain pills is sad, and tragic. Lesnar's rise in WWE, disillusionment and departure from WWE,

success in MMA, and return to WWE (albeit on a limited basis) is still an unfolding saga. Less inspiring are the stories of shooters intentionally injuring "marks," and would be wrestlers. Many in the business would call this a form of "tough love." Still, it is hard to describe wrestler Jim Wilson describing Jack Briscoe intentionally breaking the nose of a prospective wrestler's nose, at the direction of promoter Eddie Graham; "it was the first time in my life I witnessed the deliberate, sadistic breakage of human bones...As my stomach turned, Eddie Graham experienced near orgasmic excitement as he stood nearby, sweating a little and giggling." He also repeats the story of Hiro Matsuda intentionally breaking a young Terry Bollea's leg on the first day of training. If Terry Bollea is an unfamiliar name, he, after healing and being persuaded to return to training, became famous as Hulk Hogan, the most important figure in modern professional wrestling. I recommend this book for serious students of the sport. Casual readers should look elsewhere, and it is definitely not for younger readers.

If you're a pro wrestling fan, this is a must-read. If you're an MMA fan, this is a must read. With "Shooters: The Toughest Men in Professional Wrestling" Mr. Snowden has painstakingly documented the historical connection between professional wrestling and mixed martial arts in the United States. Like I said, a wonderfully researched must-read for anyone who enjoys martial arts history of any kind.

Very well written and interesting book.

As a diehard pro-wrestling fan, this book captured me from beginning to end. Had plenty of facts I didn't know and plenty that I did. Rich history and well written.

For those interesting in the history of professional wrestling or in the early history and entry of the martial art into America; this book of a fascinating read.

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