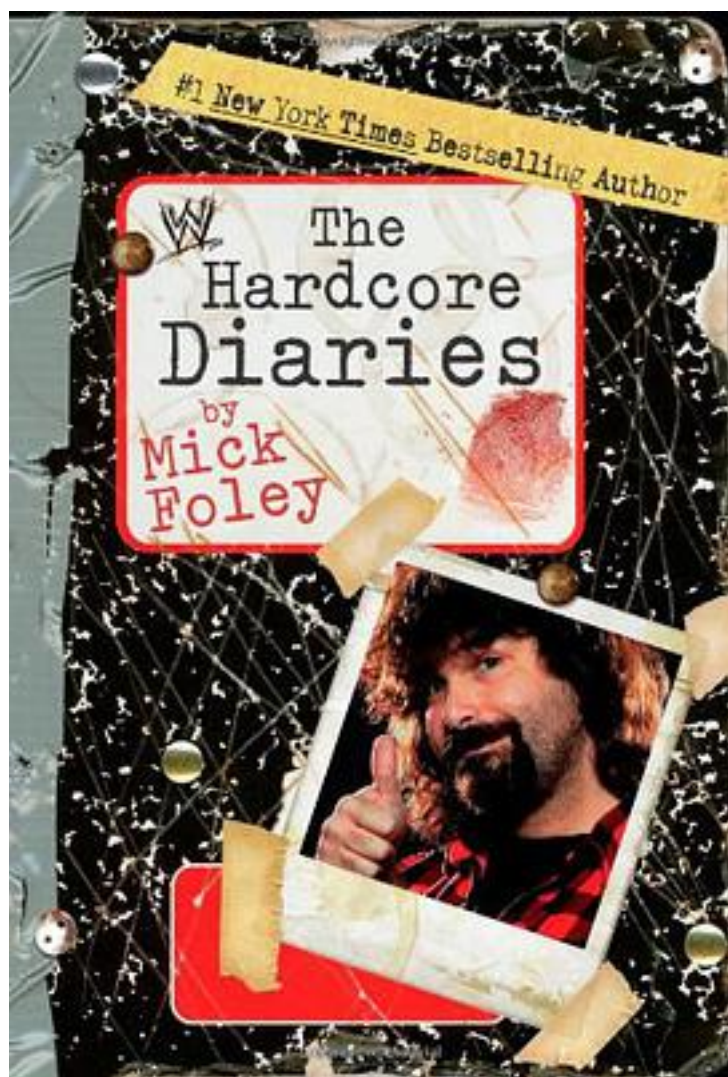


The Hardcore Diaries



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著者:Foley, Mick

出版者:

出版时间:2008-4

装帧:

isbn:9781416556787

What was I thinking? Another autobiography? A third? Who did I think I was, Winston Churchill? Why would I want to set my pen loose on hundreds of sheets of notebook paper unless I really felt I had something worth writing about? Besides, I had a wrestling comeback to prepare for, mentally and physically, provided I could get Vince McMahon and the WWE creative staff to embrace what I was sure was the single greatest storyline of my career. Then it hit me: the storyline. I would give WWE fans unprecedented access to World Wrestling Entertainment, covering everything from conception to completion. I would recount how I felt about specific interviews and matches, whether they helped or hurt. I would expose the backstage politics, shed some light on my rocky relationship with Vince McMahon, offer insights into my personal dealings with WWE Superstars, and tell stories about my favorite Divas. But I wasn't interested in writing "just" a wrestling book. I wanted to share moments from my personal life as well, from a humorous look at my unlikely dinner with polarizing neocon Paul Wolfowitz, to my haunting meeting with a severely burned boy in Afghanistan, to my peculiar obsession with a certain jolly old elf. I knew I could make the fans care about this storyline, provided I could once again find the passion to make the story come to life in arenas around the country and on television sets around the world. Most importantly, I had to ask myself a vital question, one upon which this whole idea, and therefore the book you hold, hinges: Was I willing to become the first voluntary member of the Vince McMahon "Kiss My Ass Club"? I sat on the idea for a few days, to let the idea ripen and mature in my mind, like a fine vintage wine, and to figure out if I was really willing to kiss his ass. I mean, "literally" kiss a man's ass. Sure, I'd been kissing the same guy's ass figuratively for a decade. But this was different. Did I really have the testicular fortitude required for such a task? In front of millions? Including my wife and kids? I made the call.

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