

It's True. Mayweather Wants WWE Belt Too.

Written by David A. Avila

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LOS ANGELES-In a surreal setting with various pro wrestlers both male and female sitting in the background, boxing's Pound for Pound champion Floyd Mayweather stepped on a chair and slipped right into the mood for his next venture: pro wrestling.

"I run the show," shouted Mayweather in front of more than 200 shouting pro wrestling fans inside the Staples Center walkway where the WWE press conference was held on Monday. "I'm going to take over L.A. This is my city now."

Wearing a New York Yankee baseball cap and jacket, Mayweather felt right at home among the colorful pro wrestlers despite a number of times being interrupted by fans shouting "De La Hoya, De La Hoya."

Mayweather quickly silenced those unified shouts by pulling out two wads of bills numbering more than \$5,000. He walked around looking at the crowd and tossed some at one end of the fans standing behind a barricade. When some people persisted in shouting De La Hoya's name he pulled out another wad of money and asked "who wants this?" and walked around again.

"Who's the champion?" he shouted to the fans, who replied: "You are."

Another rain of bills fell on the fans that scrambled to pick up whatever they could grasp.

The welterweight world champion of boxing signed a contract with World Wrestling Entertainment exceeding \$10 million.

Once again Mayweather is sliding into another form of entertainment.

"First there was the Dancing with the Stars," said Leonard Ellerbee, who advises Mayweather. "I worked for eight months to get that."

Now the boxing world champion is slipping into the world of professional wrestling.

"Anytime you can get a world champion of any sport to come to another form of entertainment it's a coup," said Vince McMahon, the president of WWE. "We've had other boxers cross over like Muhammad Ali, and we even had Evander Holyfield help promote a show."

With Mayweather poised to fight Oscar De La Hoya in a rematch this September 2008, the danger of an injury postponing the fight that could make each more than \$20 million or more is a real threat.

"It's a big risk you know, but that's just life," said Mayweather who is aware of the many injuries pro wrestlers suffer attempting various stunts. "They (WWE) let you do what you want to do."

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The whole affair started last week on Feb. 17 when Mayweather took his sons to watch the WWE show in Las Vegas. He was a guest of Mysterio and sat near the ring. While there he was introduced and exchanged words with seven-feet tall wrestler Paul Wight otherwise known as "the Big Show." After a few more exchanges Mayweather fired some blows on Wight. A challenge was made and Mayweather accepted.

"Did you see his black eye," asked Mayweather. "I did that to him."

During the press conference Big Show tossed down the microphone platform from the dais and proceeded to stare down Mayweather. The boxer jumped on top of a chair to be able to stare Wight eyeball to eyeball.

There were no smiles.

But after the press conference, behind a black curtain, Mayweather was smiling incessantly and eager to speak about his newest venture.

"I'm a showman," Mayweather said. "Anywhere I go I make em crazy."

The look on the pro wrestlers faces was somewhat amusing. It was kind of mild shock to the professional wrestlers who probably thought Mayweather would not be able to taunt and boast at their level.

He exceeded their level plus more.

"I'm not going to stop until I get the championship belt," said Mayweather. "I'm staying here until I become the WWE champ."

Mayweather, 31, will face 400-pound "the Big Show", at the Florida Citrus Bowl in Orlando, Florida on Sunday March 30. The fight card called Wrestlemania XXIV will be televised on pay-per-view.

"We want to expand our market visibility," said Ellerbee.

Mayweather calmly nodded his head.

"I'm a risk taker. I wanted to dip into different fields and different avenues, that's what I love to do," Mayweather said. "What better place to do it than WWE?"