

She's so bad Britney on DVD — see P.109

Wrestling's next big thing grew this size chasing cows. Got milk?

By MICHAEL GILTZ

K, everyone knows professional wrestling is a physically demanding. arduous task.

Detractors used to call it "fake"; supporters, including World Wres-tling Entertainment head Vince McMa-hon, now call it "entertainment." But while the body slams can hurt,

surely the outsize personalities of the wrestlers themselves, the pain-hungry demands for vengeance are just silly fun. Right?

Right?
Not according to Brock Lesnar, aka
"The Next Big Thing." A 25-year-old former collegiate wrestling champion who
joined the WWE (formerly WWF) in
March, Lesnar loves to rile up the crowd,
taunt his opponents and use the infamous
"Brock Lock" to inflict pain.
"I'm myself pretty much," says the 6-ft,
4-in, 295-fb Lesnar. "My character in the
WWE is me; just multiply it a little bit."
So when World Wrestling Magazine describes a childhood wrestling match in
epic terms and says "At the tender age of
five, Brock Lesnar was already a monster," it isn't just hype?

ster," it isn't just hype?
"I was a big bully as a kid," laughs Les-nar from his home in Minneapolis. "I was always a big kid and I was always trying to run the playground. I was always fight-ing and doing all kinds of stuff. It was just in me; I didn't back down to anybody. I would bend the rules."

That aggressive stance has paid off. Les-nar is already a star on "WWE Raw," airing Mondays at 9 on TNN. He com-petes tonight at 8 in "Vengeance," a pay-per-view match from Detroit in which he

goes up against Rob Van Dam. And, most importantly, on Aug. 25 he fights for the WWE undisputed championship at Nassau Coliseum on Long Is-land, less than a year after making his professional debut.

professional debut.

Lesnar's opponent will be determined tonight at "Vengeance," during a three-way match between The Rock (who's already slated for a sequel to The Scorpion Kings, the Undertaker and Kurt Angle.

All three are big stars, so Lesnar's match is a chance to join them as a hot property, are stalling from a subsulp a delication.

a wrestling icon, and a valuable addition to an industry that's lost a little heat since its late-'90s peak.

It also means a chance at money for an athlete who devoted his life to a sport that offered little fame and no possibility of financial reward.

"I feel very fortunate," says Lesnar. "A lot of my friends from college don't have this opportunity and I do. I was blessed with my size and my look and everything and I feel very, very fortunate. Definitely all the years of hard work paid off." Lesnar grew up on a dairy farm in Web-

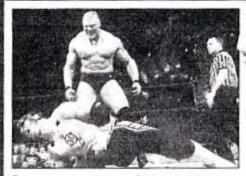
ster, South Dakota, so early hours and hard work were a given even as a little

"It's 24 hours a day," says Lesnar. "We had to put up hay and harvest our small grains and milk 120 cows." But Lesnar increased his workload tre-

But Lennar increased his workload tre-mendously by pursuing collegiate wres-tling — all for a sport that gets precious little attention by the media. Lesnar achieved his ultimate goal — the NCAA title in his weight class — and says fraukly that WWE fame and fortune pales in companion.

in comparison.
"That means more to me than any pay-





"I was a big bully as a kid," says 295-lb. Brock Lesnar (right and in the ring, above), an aggressive stance that has paid off for the WWE star.

day in the WWE," admits Lesnar. "There's only a select few people in the United States that can say they're NCAA champions. Even though it's only a little plaque - that's all you get - to me, it's in my heart. It's with me forever."

Then he was faced with a crucial deci-sion. Should he pursue a gold medal at the Olympics, attend a tryout for professional football (Tampa Ray and Washington had invited him to give it a shot) or listen to the offers of the WWE?

When it really came down to it, wasn't really a hard decision to make," he says. "I like being cen-ter stage and I like wrestling. Even though it's a different kind, I still get the hen it really came down to it, it same feeling when I walk through the

Now, unexpectedly, Lesnar is actually making money from a sport he pursued simply for the love of competition.

He doesn't pay any attention to the T-

fiance Nicole snag more man two min-ute's rest at a time.

"Yeah, Mya's pretty good," says Lesnar, forgetting for a moment he' a fierce, pain-mad warrior for the WWE.

There's no wedding date as of yet, so when will Nicole make a decent man out of him? "I don't know," laughs Lesnar, "I might not ever be a decent man.

