



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact:

Manny Leto

813.675.8985

mleto@tampabayhistorycenter.org



Tampa Bay History Center Hosts Florida Wrestling “Showdown”

The History Center’s latest exhibit looks at the bay area’s pro wrestling roots

(Tampa, MARCH 3, 2020) --- Pop quiz: What do Hulk Hogan, Chyna and “Mr. Wonderful” Paul Orndorff have in common? They all lived in Tampa.

Florida – especially the Tampa Bay area – has been home to a who’s who of larger-than-life pro wrestling personas – everyone from “The American Dream” Dusty Rhodes to “The Doctor of Thuganomics” John Cena.

Step into the squared circle and step back in time with Dusty, Hulk Hogan and some of Florida’s best-known wrestling superstars during “Sunshine State Showdown: Pro Wrestling in Tampa Bay,” opening Saturday, March 7 at 10 a.m. at the Tampa Bay History Center.

See the stories behind the legends along with one-of-a-kind artifacts from the archives of the WWE.

On opening day, guests can meet with WWE Superstar Titus O’Neil from 12 – 2 p.m.

The exhibit will feature Tampa's Rocky "Soul Man" Johnson's robe and boots, the NWA Championship title belt, original posters, programs and tickets from bouts throughout the bay area and more.

Guests will learn about the origins of professional wrestling in America, classic wrestling moves, wrestling jargon and trash talk.

"Florida has long been home to passionate wrestling fans and A-list wrestlers," said the History Center's Curator of Public History, Dr. Brad Massey. "The Tampa armory hosted professional and amateur wrestling and, later, the bay area was a headquarters for some of wrestling's biggest stars. "Macho Man" Randy Savage, Hulk Hogan, John Cena - they all have bay area connections."

The exhibit highlights the language of professional wrestling, exploring classic phrases and "trash talk," like Tampa resident John Cena's "you can't see me," to industry jargon. Terms like "heel" and "push" have a meaning all their own within the sport.

"Wrestling has a very specific language, and we had fun with the jargon and trash talk that's part of the sport's unique nomenclature," said Dr. Massey.

"Sunshine State Showdown" is on view at the History Center March 7 through October 18. For more information, visit tampabayhistorycenter.org or call 813.228.0097.

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Get in the Ring at one of these upcoming events:

March 6 – Member Preview

5:30-7:30 p.m. Limited tickets available to the public.

March 7 – Exhibition opens to the public

12 – 2 p.m. Meet with WWE Superstar Titus O'Neil*

*Talent subject to change

March 28 – Brewseum After Dark

Test your wrestling trivia knowledge while exploring the exhibit and talking with history center curators. 5-8 p.m. at the History Center; pre-registration required.

(End)

Located on Tampa's Riverwalk, the **Tampa Bay History Center** includes three floors of permanent and temporary exhibition space focusing on 12,000 years of Florida's history and culture. A Smithsonian Affiliate museum and accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, the History Center includes the Touchton Map Library and Florida Center for Cartographic Education and the Witt Research Center, and is home to the Columbia Cafe. One of Tampa's premier cultural venues, the History Center's hands-on, interactive exhibits and theaters provide an

entertaining and educational experience for visitors of all ages. For more information, visit www.tampabayhistorycenter.org.

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