

Soap operas for men

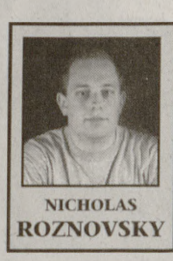
Professional wrestling, WCW should be judged for what they are: pure fun

While coming back from my first class last Monday, I sat next to a wide-eyed freshman on the bus. As it wound through campus, he looked at the throngs of people going to and from class with the awe and amazement that only a true newbie can feel. When the bus finally made its stop outside Reed Arena, the freshman became extremely excited and turned to me to say something.

I could tell by the look on his face that he was really worked up about something. Perhaps it was apprehension about his first day of college. Maybe he was excited to finally be a real Texas A&M student. When he finally spoke, the question that came forth from his lips both surprised and amused me.

"Hey, man," he asked, pointing to Reed Arena, "do you know how I can get some wrestling tickets?"

If there is one thing that can distract the 18-year-old male from the fact that he is finally out of the house and surrounded by 20,000 college-age women, it is professional wrestling. For many boys, teens and grown men, wrestling is more than just a sport — it is a way of life.



NICHOLAS ROZNOVSKY

male-targeted soap operas deliver storylines punctuated with romance, infidelity and the occasional crime, male-oriented wrestling mixes the realms of sports and combat into a single entity punctuated with the occasional crime.

Those who criticize wrestling as nothing more than mindless violence obviously have never taken the time to sit down and actually watch it. While the mindlessness of wrestling seems somewhat unquestionable, the violence controversy is blown out of proportion.

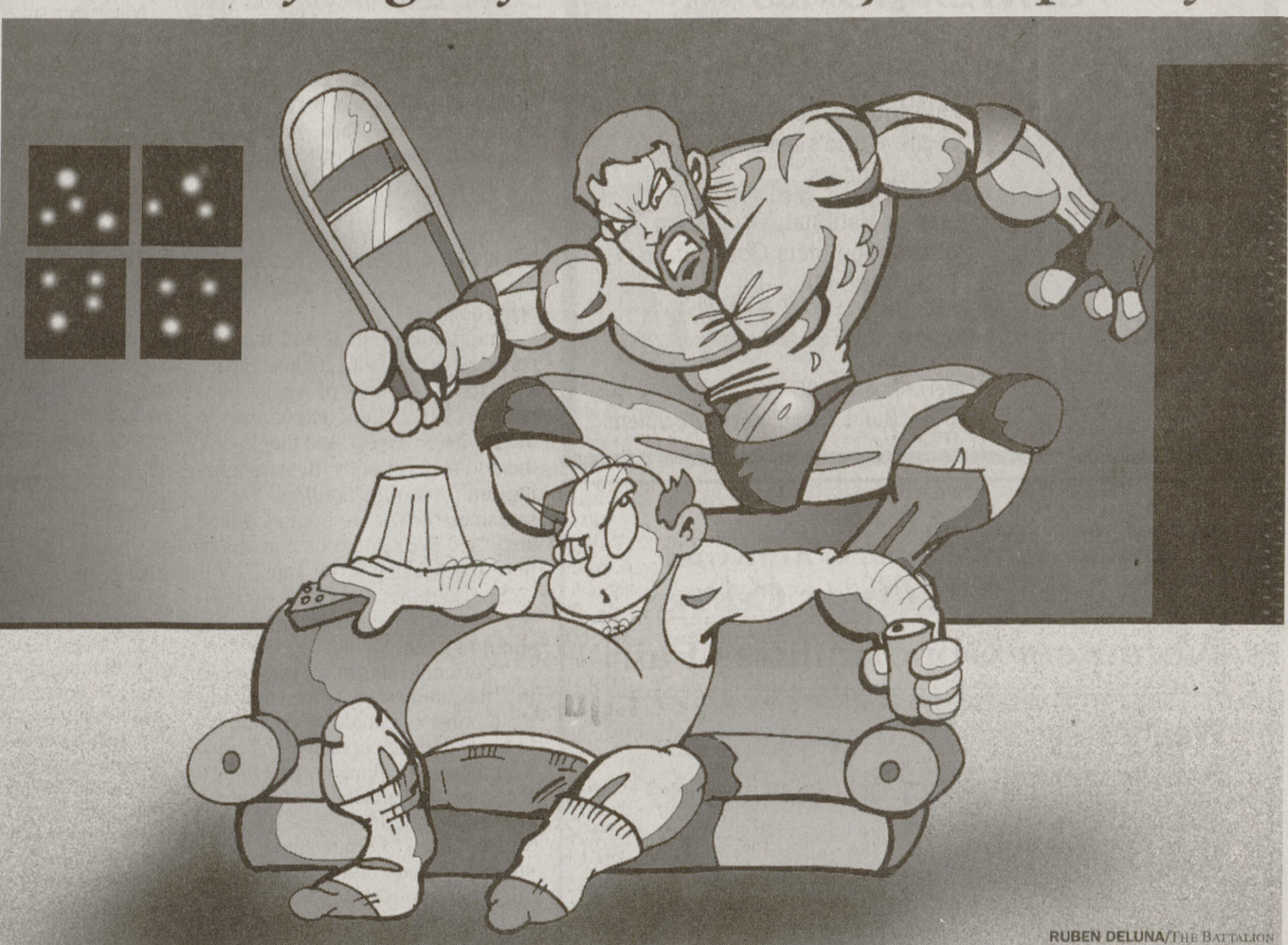
The kicks, punches and slams of the giant acrobats are so choreographed that they often resemble a brawl from West Side Story. Not even first graders are naive enough to believe that the men in the ring are actually fighting.

The most important aspect of professional wrestling has nothing to do with wrestling itself. Night in and night out, the cameras spend more time on individual personalities, boasting of their great physical prowess and pandering to the crowd. In a two-hour program, little more than 20 minutes will feature any form of physical activity at all.

If the writers of "ER" run out of script ideas, they invent a 20-car pile-up to keep the audience on the edge of their seats. When the professional wrestling scribes run out of things to add to their convoluted plot, they mix in a little mindless mayhem.

Surprisingly, the background stories utilize some of the classic themes of literature — good guys, bad guys, revenge, vindication, honor, betrayal, joy and despair. Certainly, it is not Shakespeare, but it does a good enough job holding the attention of its audience. In many ways, wrestling is the only purely American form of performance art.

In the world of wrestling, other critics complain that women are portrayed as little more than sex objects. Apparently, these people have never seen the 20-something Fabio clone doctors who seem to make up the



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

entire collection of male actors in shows such as "As The World Turns" and "Days Of Our Lives."

Even the elderly grandfather characters have a torrid love affair with their grandson's wife's neighbor's uncle's dental hygienist every once in a while.

Yes, wrestling is mindless. Yes, wrestling is stupid. But it provides a sizeable portion of the male population with something that all humans need — a temporary escape from the trials and tribulations of daily life.

In many ways, wrestling actually resembles real life more than the afternoon teledramas.

When was the last time a person heard about Goldberg's mother being abducted by an ultra-radical revolutionary group on some unnamed tropical island?

Wrestling is inane. It needs to be. Whether people prefer their entertainment with sweaty guys smashing metal chairs on each other's heads or a thrice-divorced doctor seducing the trendy fashion magazine editor, they need stupidity in their lives.

Let the wrestling fans have their fun tonight at Reed Arena. In a collegiate environment that becomes more and more stressful with each passing semester, chances for mindless fun like this do not come around very often.

Nicholas Roznovsky is a senior political science major.

Mail Call

Religion not exclusive to conservative party

In response to Mark Passwaters' Aug. 30 column.

Passwaters must be speaking in jest when he suggests that the Democratic Party has spent years "denying their Lord."

Religion has not now, nor has it ever been, solely the domain of the right. To suggest otherwise is lamentable and misguided.

To suggest that religion's influence is premised in the parties' increasing move toward the political middle only exacerbates the situation.

The end of "welfare as we know it" was the product of a collaboration between the GOP and the "moderate" Democrats so frequently associated with the Democratic Leadership Council.

While Republicans are often quick to cite their own support for such policies before they become politically fashionable, such support hardly seems in keeping with the social justice imperatives of most major religious denominations.

To suggest that Gov. Bush and his Republican cronies have a monopoly on religiously inspired piety again begs the question of what faith means. For the governor, his own professed Christian faith has done absolutely nothing to alter the most draconian and inhuman

criminal justice system in the nation. Gore and Lieberman are men of faith, and that fact makes them neither better nor worse than their electoral rivals.

While pandering may be a valid charge against them, that charge is equally applicable to Gov. Bush and his running mate Dick Cheney.

Furthermore, they are members of the Democratic party who have always considered themselves people of faith. The Christian Left remains a vital force for progressive political change in this country, albeit without the press coverage and the support of right-wing multi-millionaires like Richard Mellon-Scaife.

Nick Rangel
Speech communication
doctorate student

Longhorn appreciates machine team's story

In response to an AP story in The Battalion.

I was recently informed by an Aggie friend that you ran the Associated Press story regarding the University of Texas-Austin Rube Goldberg Machine Contest team winning the national championship earlier this year.

As leader of the team, I speak for all of us when I express my appreciation for your publishing that article.

The *Daily Texan* did not have a single word about it. They did not respond to us telling them numerous times that we were running the machine for public viewing. The viewings drew crowds of up to 100 people every hour.

Apparently, national championship victories are not exciting enough for them.

Maybe they are too liberal to care about anything that sounds engineering-related.

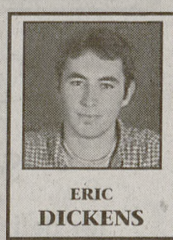
Do not get me wrong; I bleed burnt orange and I absolutely love UT. But our newspaper sure sucks sometimes.

Thank you.

Chad Bruns
University of Texas-Austin
mechanical engineering
graduate student

A Higher Standard Tougher, enforceable laws are needed to curb rampant online piracy

Something about the Internet breeds idealism. From the "e-commerce should be tax-free" argument to the concept of the public domain — information should be accessible to all — the Internet has existed as its own entity, outside conventional rules and laws. However, there is another way to view the Internet, firmly planting it in the reality of law books. Under copyright laws, if people create something, such as a photograph, they retain ownership of that creative work. That ownership has been extended to any work that requires a person's creative input — including software.



ERIC DICKENS

Since the Internet is basically a jumbled pile of software, the Web is full of intellectual property rights. However, from MP3s to GIF files to the programs that made

ple, Corel and Symantec in its ranks, the BSA is working harder than ever to protect its members' copyrights.

However, if the RIAA, BSA, or any other copyright-enforcing body wants to make more than a dent against online piracy, the battle will have to be fought on Capitol Hill, as well as online.

The current system of copyright laws works well against tangible infringements, like selling shirts with a company's logo, but it is inadequate when code and digits are being stolen. To realistically enforce copyrights online, there need to be aggressive, enforceable laws with agents actively seeking out instances of blatant infringement.

It is easy for most college students to turn a blind eye to online piracy. It often seems the victim of such infringement is a faceless corporation. Who cares if Bill Gates loses \$5 million this year — he can afford it, right?

The truth is that other than Gates and his fat-cat cohorts, people are losing to software piracy. One of the reasons retail software prices are so high is that manufacturers have to compensate for money lost to piracy.

Furthermore, the 1999 Global Software Piracy Report determined the United States software industry loses about \$3.2 million a year. To recover money lost from bootleg distribution, software companies have kept prices artificially high for more than a decade.

In the end, those who purchase software legally pay the price for online piracy. Likewise, the developers who lose money are not always faceless corporations. Just as illegal copies of Microsoft Office are floating around the Internet, so are registration keys for and full versions of programs made by amateur developers.

College students — even high school students — who put their programs on the Internet often find their work hacked, cracked and pirated by the unpaid masses.

The spectrum of people whose copyrights are ignored online extends beyond software developers.

Many college students have created their own Websites with original artwork, photographs or writing. While

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them, online ownership rights have been trampled over for some time now.

The Napster vs. Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) lawsuit has brought digital copyright infringement into the spotlight, but the fight against piracy online has been a long and mostly quiet one.

In 1997, President Clinton signed the No Electronic Theft Act (NET) that allows criminal prosecution of copyright infringement, even if the accused is not trying to make money off the infringement. This closed a huge loophole in copyright law and advanced the scope of law enforcement.

In mid-August, the Business Software Alliance (BSA) received more than \$200,000 in settlement money from two companies using unlicensed software products. With companies like Microsoft, Ap-

most of these artists are not trying to sell their work through their Websites, they probably would want credit for their creativity when it shows up on other sites.

The solutions to fighting online piracy start small. When people use other's creative works, they should recognize the creator's ownership by paying for use of those works.

If somebody wants to use photographs from a Texas A&M sophomore's personal Website, the student's permission should be sought and credit should be given.

This is a small example of copyright infringement. Anyone who has checked out the huge number of illegal "warez" sites online has an idea how deep the well of pirated software runs. To truly stem the tide of blatant copyright infringement on the Internet, legislation with teeth is needed.

Cases that the BSA has successfully settled have been initiated by employees reporting their company's copyright infringement. The BSA has attacked mid-sized companies that cannot use the Internet's anonymity to hide their illegal software copies. But that is exactly what happens in most cases of software piracy — after digging around online, a Web user can find a free copy of pretty much any retail software.

To drain this pool of copyright infringement, law enforcement officials should follow the footsteps of the average Web surfer and actively seek out "warez" sites. Locating the sites is not enough.

The RIAA's lawsuit against Napster is putting to test the accusation that providing a link to an illegal file is enough to constitute copyright infringement. If the courts decide in favor of the RIAA, which the first lawsuit's ruling already did, the law might finally be able to catch up to online pirates.

Following the NET Act's removal of profit motive, defining links to pirated software as a crime would close another loophole in copyright law.

Actively enforcing that law could cut down on a lot of overt online piracy, and that would benefit all users.

Eric Dickens is a senior English major.

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