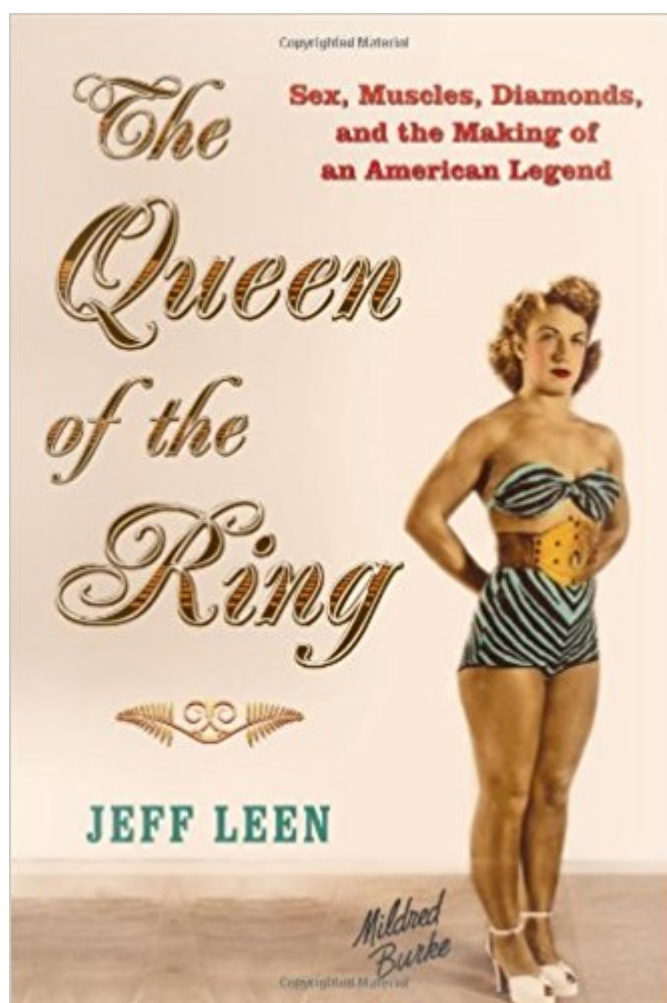


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The Queen Of The Ring: Sex, Muscles, Diamonds, And The Making Of An American Legend



Synopsis

At only five foot two, Mildred Burke was an unlikely candidate for the ring. A waitress barely scraping by on Depression-era tips, she wanted more, and she saw her chance when she witnessed her first wrestling match. Even against all odds, she knew that she could become a female wrestler. What followed was a gritty, glittering testament to the golden age of wrestling, when beauty and brawn captivated the world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In this intriguing biography, Leen (Kings of Cocaine) chronicles the life of the queen of the mat, Mildred Burke, women's wrestling champion and pioneer of the sport. Burke (1915â€“1989), along with her husband and manager, Billy Wolfe, are credited with having invented professional women's wrestling and bringing it to prominence: Her muscles and his mind had made the industry of women's professional wrestling in America. Their rise, fall and resurrection is a story as bizarre and titillating as wrestling's own carnival roots. The king and queen of lady rassling broke barriers despite a ban on women's wrestling in many states. Leen, managing editor for the Washington Post's investigations unit, deftly guides the reader through well-documented and researched accounts, which are culled from Burke's unpublished autobiography, interviews and numerous newspaper records. Leen writes: Her speed and skill made her wrestling a thing of beauty in the ring, full of careful shifts of balance and swift and surprising combinations that turned the straining of muscle and limb into a ballet of grace and power. Flavored with authentic speech and dedicated to

accuracy, this biography is the tale of an underdog who triumphed. B&w photos. (Aug.) Copyright
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“In a class by itself. A serious history of one of this country’s goofiest pastimes...one senses that [Leen has] left no stone unturned in researching Burke’s story.”
The Washington Post
“An all-American story of a woman who rises above her downtrodden circumstances to make something of herself.”
Barry Gewen, The New York Times
“You won’t be disappointed”
Leen has [Burke’s] story pinned to the mat.”
USA Today
“Leen can deliver gripping scenes; a rewarding read, an untold tale that completely deserves the telling.”
St. Petersburg Times
“Jeff Leen has made a fabulous contribution to the sports-history canon. The Queen of the Ring is a marvelous evocation of an era, and a riveting portrait of a one-of-a-kind American moll.”
Sally Jenkins, author of The Real All-Americans

Jeff Leen pens one of the finer sports biographies of the great Mildred Burke. A seminal figure for professional women’s wrestling. At 5’ 2" of muscle and sheer tenacity of spirit she helped and in fact did break the sexual barriers of a male dominated sport. But not without giving her mind body, soul and heart to wrestling. Her body and heart often broken, spirit tested, she dominated for more than two decades before retiring into a trainer till her death in 1987. This book is explicit in detailing both in words and some photos a life of drudgery starting in Coffeetown, KS from a waitress to a Carney attraction taking on mostly men to finally a champion wrestler going after equally hungry females anxious for a shot at her title. She would be lavished with more money than she could’ve dreamt, along with diamonds, fine clothes, \$1000 dollar robes and rubbing shoulders with enamored celebrities and adoring fans. But she would pay dearly with car accidents, cheating and alcoholic men, jealous opponents looking to dethrone her and a strong body racked with ring injuries. Hers is a story of triumph and tragedy that ultimately culminates in the creation of a legend still admired today.

In "Queen of the Ring," Jeff Leen uses the story of Mildred Burke as a canvas to craft a compelling, and wildly entertaining portrait of professional wrestling, and the struggle of women wrestlers to get credit for their athleticism and ability to put butts in arena seats. As a teenage, single mother Burke saw wrestling as a way to a better life. At her mother’s diner she met the man, Billie Wolfe, who would be her Svengali, and ultimately her nemesis. Leading her to recognition as

the Women's Champion (including an incredible draw against her greatest rival in what may have been the last "real" pro wrestling match in the U.S.). After a tortured marriage marked with domestic violence on Billy's part and infidelity by both, Wolfe would drive his ex-wife to the margins of professional wrestling. Burke found "life after Wolfe," by wrestling in Japan, and ultimately, in producing films of mixed wrestling, where women successfully defeated male opponents. These films touched on some of the deepest undercurrents of sex, violence, and fetishism that have always been part of wrestling's secret heart. "Queen" is, ultimately, a vivid portrait of a changing society, a changing sport (and yes, even "worked" pro wrestling is a sport), and a changing paradigm of relations between the sexes, both sexually, and in power dynamics. I think it would make a heck of a movie, and a film version could be developed from a variety of perspectives. The story of Mildred (Bliss) Burke that wrestling fans, and non-fans alike can both enjoy and learn from

I am a big fan of "old school" women's wrestling and I just loved this book. I brought it with me during a flight to London and this book made the flight a total pleasure. I loosely knew the Mildred Burke story from the "Lipstick and Dynamite" film and from several mentions in the Wrestling Observer newsletter but this book taught me a lot about her amazing career. Mildred was a huge star back in the day but she is pretty obscure among today's fans so this book will hopefully help to get her accomplishments known. Beyond the fact that the wrestling stories are interesting, there is plenty to admire in general just based on how Mildred was able to break so many barriers especially in an era where being a wrestler was far from a typical occupation for a woman. Burke reminds me of Broadway legend Ethel Merman. However, in terms of fame Merman is legendary in Broadway circles while Burke's story has been largely forgotten which is unfortunate. If you are familiar with Fabulous Moolah and Mae Young from their WWE appearances, it's interesting to note that it was Mildred who inspired these two legends to break into the business! The one error I found in the book is that it says Moolah won the women's belt from Wendi Richter at the first Wrestlemania when it was Richter who beat Moolah's protege Leilani Kai at this show. Interestingly, Moolah won the belt back from Richter in a double cross in late 1985. Double crosses are mentioned fairly often in this book but the Moolah/Richter double cross is not brought up. You won't be sorry...purchase this book now!

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