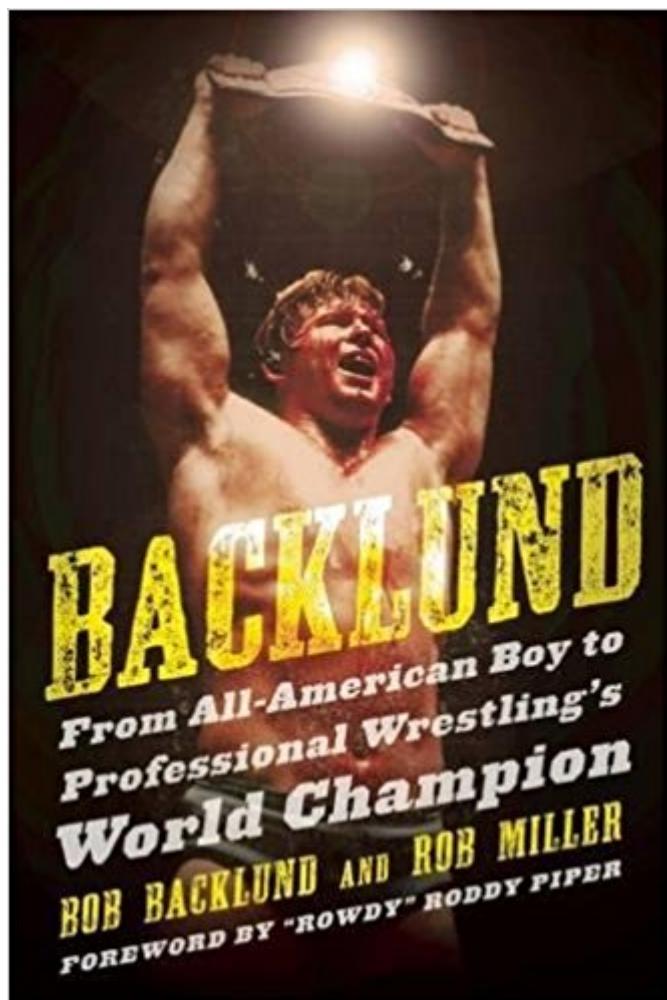


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# Backlund: From All-American Boy To Professional Wrestling's World Champion



## Synopsis

Bob Backlund began life as a poor farm boy in the little village of Princeton, Minnesota, with a population of just over 2,000 people. He was a below-average student with a lackluster work ethic and a bad attitude, who hung with the wrong crowd and made a lot of bad choices. He was a kid whose life was headed for disaster; until a local coach took interest in him, suggested that he take up amateur wrestling, and offered to work with him if he promised to stay out of trouble. It was in North Dakota that Bob Backlund had the first of several chance encounters that would shape his destiny. While working out at the YMCA gymnasium in Fargo, North Dakota, where he wrestled for North Dakota State, Backlund met a well-known professional wrestler, Superstar Billy Graham. The men talked, and at Graham's suggestion, Backlund was inspired to pursue a career in professional wrestling. Less than five years from that day, on February 20, 1978, Backlund would find himself halfway across the country, standing in the middle of the ring at Madison Square Garden with his hand raised in victory as the newly crowned World Wide Wrestling Federation Heavyweight Champion. The man Backlund pinned for the championship that night was none other than Superstar Billy Graham. Featuring contributions from Bruno Sammartino, Harley Race, Terry Funk, Pat Patterson, Ken Patera, Sergeant Slaughter, The Magnificent Muraco, George "The Animal" Steele, "Mr. USA" Tony Atlas, The Iron Sheik, and many others, this book tells the incredible story of the life and nearly forty-year career of one of the most famous men to ever grace the squared circle. Skyhorse Publishing, as well as our Sports Publishing imprint, is proud to publish a broad range of books for readers interested in sports; books about baseball, pro football, college football, pro and college basketball, hockey, or soccer, we have a book about your sport or your team. In addition to books on popular team sports, we also publish books for a wide variety of athletes and sports enthusiasts, including books on running, cycling, horseback riding, swimming, tennis, martial arts, golf, camping, hiking, aviation, boating, and so much more. While not every title we publish becomes a New York Times bestseller or a national bestseller, we are committed to publishing books on subjects that are sometimes overlooked by other publishers and to authors whose work might not otherwise find a home.

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## Customer Reviews

Robert Lee Bob Backlund is the former two-time World Wrestling Federation Heavyweight Champion, with an in-ring career that has spanned nearly 40 years. He has wrestled nearly every big name in the sport, including Hulk Hogan, Ric Flair, Superfly Jimmy Snuka, Rowdy Roddy Piper, Macho Man Randy Savage, and Andre the Giant. Backlund continues to make occasional appearances for the WWE, teaching amateur wrestling to children and traveling the country as a much-loved motivational speaker. He will be inducted into the WWE Hall of Fame on April 6, 2013. Robert H. Rob Miller is a trial lawyer, equity partner, and member of the Management Committee at the New Englandbased law firm of Sheehan, Phinney, Bass & Green. He is also the critically acclaimed author of titles including "Law School Confidential." A fan of wrestling since childhood, Miller has always considered Bob Backlund his hero. Miller lives in Hopkinton, New Hampshire, with his wife, Carolyn, and their two sons."

Backlund is, far and away, one of the best wrestling books yet. As someone who lived through the eras of Bruno and Pedro, I was as skeptical as everyone else that the All-American Boy experiment would fail miserably. Having seen Backlund's entire career in the WWF, from the year-long television build-up to every main event at MSG, I can say that Bob proved all the naysayers wrong. While learning about Bob's early life issues, and enjoying reliving the exact history of his 6 year WWF reign, it was really interesting to see how Bob was respected throughout the wrestling world, and why. Unlike some other books, where the wrestlers sugar-coated their criticism of others, Bob was extremely candid. That was refreshing. While Bob went out of his to be fair when critiquing other wrestlers' shortcomings in the ring, such as Ox Baker or Jesse Ventura, he pulled no punches in calling out those who had character deficiencies, such as Stan Hansen, King Kong Mosca, and even Mil Mascaras. The back-room politics were brought to light, and how Bob rose above the fray in

that area. For those who lived through the Backlund years, this is a must-read. For those who didn't but love pro wrestling, it is also a must-read. Congrats to Mr. Backlund and co-author Rob Miller!

Met Bob Backlund at an Allentown book signing for this... Was kinda nervous since he had been a hero to me growing up in the 70s/80s, and I was hoping he wasn't going to be the jerk character he portrayed later in his career... He wasn't - he was a nice guy who was a straight shooter - and I appreciated knowing that he was an authentic person in an industry that turned out to not be as real as I was led to believe. Reading this book, I found that Bob did indeed have the chops to go head-to-head with the wrestlers of the time and he deserved the championship for his run... He was exciting to watch, and hearing the behind the scenes stuff was really fun and interesting to hear... Some of the scripted beefs have nothing on what happened behind the scenes... Mr Backlunds book is NOT approved by the WWF/WWE, so I highly recommend this book if you want to hear about things without the WWE PR Machine changing things for convenience... That being said, its not a whiny tale of where the WWF did him wrong either... Its a very balanced book in its handling of the WWE - which is very refreshing. The only complaint I have against the book is that while Bob's wrestling career and how he got there is covered in depth, it barely skims over his post-wrestling career. I get why - he probably thinks it isn't interesting - but he's wrong... What he did after he got out of wrestling is what makes this great wrestler human... For example: He ran for Congress, but its only a single sentence in the book... I doubt a second book about his post-wrestling days would go over well, but I would love to hear more about Bob Backlund the man vs Bob Backlund the Wrestler... I might be an anomaly here, but that's my only complaint... The book is definitely a great read to hear a complete version of the wrestler

Growing up, Saturdays always meant watching WWWF Championship Wrestling and All Star Wrestling on TV. The stars of that era were Bruno, Pedro Morales, Superstar Billy Graham and this young talent named Bob Backlund. For the next 6 years I watched him on TV and at the Philadelphia Spectrum in the ultimate morality tale of "good vs. evil." When he "lost" the title, I lost interest in pro wrestling because it became too cartoonish. Bob Backlund disappeared from wrestling for the most part, and that was a shame because he was such an exceptional ambassador for the sport. His work ethic was legendary and he always gave the fans 110% in everything he did. I was delighted that Bob has finally told his story. "Backlund" was a terrific read and what you want in any sports autobiography- the author's real story, not a ghostwriter's. Robert Miller, as his co-writer, is an excellent "tag team partner" to help bring Bob's career to life on the page. It is incredibly

detailed, from Bob's humble beginnings and tough family situation to the lean years starting out on the pro wrestling circuit to reaching the pinnacle as WWWF Champion. Bob takes you behind the scenes, year by year, and the wrestlers and promoters and story angles are described and explained. Unlike other wrestler biographies, Bob does not try to re-write history- he's the first to admit his charisma on the microphone was lacking and completely respects those in the industry who did not believe he was the right or best choice to be champion. But what I remember, and many WWWF fans will remember, is that for nearly 6 years the arenas were SRO when he was main eventing. Do a YouTube search of his matches and you'll see fans standing on their feet, screaming their lungs out and cheering on their hero. Today, that is the exception and not the rule in a typical WWE card today. I also enjoyed the sections that included guest commentary from Roddy Piper, Bruno Sammartino, Terry Funk, Ken Patera, Harley Race, Sgt. Slaughter and the Iron Sheik. It revealed that Bob's hard work and devotion to the fans (and making his opponents look as good as possible) allowed him to earn the respect of wrestlers and promoters across the country. It also helps you to understand the reasons why he would never "sell out" and turn heel right after Hogan got the belt, even though it would have probably set him for life financially. While pro wrestling is a fictitious soap opera, when you finish reading this book you will realize that Bob Backlund's ethics and integrity made him a champion in real life.

This one really surprised me, in a good way. I was wary of being disappointed by another pro wrestling autobiography such as the ones written by Hacksaw Duggan, Lex Luger or George Steele. I was expecting a light, breezy read but found a masterpiece. Every section of this book was quite interesting! From Backlund's pre-wrestling early days to the mid 90's return. I would have liked to have learned more about his time from 1984-1992 and post his WWE return but I understand that this book couldn't be 1,000 pages long! I'd read a sequel though...

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