The Queen of the Ring: Sex, Muscles, Diamonds, and the Making of an American Legend by Jeff Leen

How A Woman Wrestler Overcame Male Chauvinism And Helped Shape 21St Century America

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.

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My Personal Review:
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 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.

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