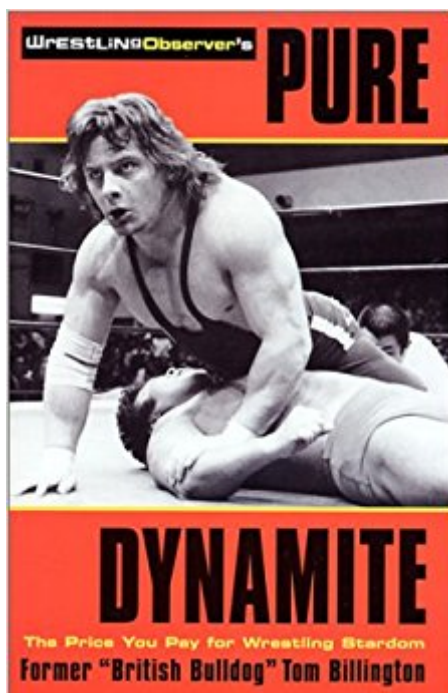


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# Pure Dynamite: The Price You Pay For Wrestling Stardom



## Synopsis

Pure Dynamite is a blow by blow account of the career of Tom Billington, who wrestled solo as The Dynamite Kid, and with Davey Boy Smith as half of the British Bulldogs tag team. Twice world champion, Billington was featured in the pages of Playboy magazine and was an international celebrity. Although he should have been a millionaire when he retired in 1993, after 16 years of professional wrestling, he had little but memories are scar tissue to show for it. As one of the first bona fide superstars in the World Wrestling Federation, Billington's career parallels the development of the WWF, from the early days to the decade following the first Wrestlemania event at Madison Square Gardens in 1985. He worked with every major promoter, and wrestled with some of the biggest names in the sport. His story is a candid expose of the highs and lows of a cultural phenomenon that is still growing today. Now confined to a wheelchair as a result of serious damage to his back and legs, his years of steroid use have also damages Billington's heart and personal life. Pure Dynamite is as much a cautionary tale as it is a glimpse into the world of a wrestling legend.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

From Humble beginnings in England, to warm family atmosphere of the Hart Foundation in Calgary, Canada, to heights of success with the WWF, Tom Billington wrestled all the big names, including Andre the Giant, Hulk Hogan, and Mick "Cactus Jack" Foley. Now, scar tissue and memories are all he has to show for sixteen years in the game. Pure Dynamite is a blow by blow account of Tom Billington's career, who wrestled solo as the Dynamite kid and with Davey Boy Smith as the world-champion tag team, the British Bulldogs. Confined to a wheel chair as a result of damage to

his back and legs, years of steroid use have also done serious damage to Billington's heart and personal life. Pure Dynamite is as much a cautionary tale as it is a fairytale. Painfully candid, The Kid's story takes all the gloss off professional wrestling. The price you pay for wrestling stardom? Just as Tom Billington.

I was warned. I bought it anyway. Tom Billington comes across as a mean and bitter former wrestler. And these are his words. If you can't get yourself over in a book, not sure what you can do about it. Don't get me wrong, I truly enjoyed his work in the ring. He always came across as completely believable (not unlike Chris Benoit) and was a great worker. As for outside the ring, this book doesn't help my opinion of Mr. Billington. Ribs are part of wrestling, but from his descriptions, he crossed the line on more than one occasion. His insistence on "demanding respect" included having problems with what can often be called at worst, minimal slights or more often misunderstandings. None of this is the end of the world, but rather a telling aspect about the man. I won't say the book wasn't worth the read, but note that it is not exactly a positive view of either the business or of Billington himself.

If you were a fan of Dynamite Kid the wrestler, you will enjoy this book. I loved hearing tales about wrestling in Britain, Canada, Germany, and Japan. You hear his take on some infamous ribs and the backstage fight with Jaques Rougeau. Sadly his injuries lead to his increased alcohol and drug abuse and that seemed to shorten his temper as well as his career.

A brutal cautionary tale about the high price of pursuing a passion. Mr. Billington definitely left a mark in his chosen profession as both an innovator and a box office attraction. However, the myopia he consistently demonstrated while performing in the ring and partying outside of it meant he neglected not only his own health but the needs of those around him, including his children and their mother. Greatness comes with a cost. Reading this book is a harsh reminder of how high that cost can be.

Back in the mid to late 80's I was a big fan of the British Bulldogs when they wrestled in the WWF but I could never understand why they didn't win more often. They won the tag title at WrestleMania 2 over the vastly inferior "Dream Team" but lost it to the Hart foundation in January 1987 after an impressive nine month reign. That would be the last time they would ever hold the gold and they proceeded to lose

their matches in the next two WrestleMania events. It felt as if the WWF had lost all confidence in them and without warning they disappeared completely after just four years in the WWF. This was all prior to the internet and I couldn't have known of Dynamite's serious back injury or the fact the bulldogs were locker room bastards. The other problem may have been that the WWF realized that Dynamite Kid was a ticking time bomb and in fact he was forced to retire just three years later. He made a slight comeback in 1993 but as a shadow of his former self and after a second seizure in 1996 his career was entirely over. His final match is available on YouTube and it's painful to see the once powerful and acrobatic Dynamite Kid looking frail and wasted. Pure Dynamite is Tom Billington's own account of his life from growing up in Lancashire, England to his premature retirement at the age of 33 and to his eventual confinement to a wheelchair. Mostly Billington lists off names of wrestlers he dealt with including whether he liked them or not. He liked Harley Race, didn't like Big Daddy (popular British wrestler from the 70s). There are a lot of references to Billington's infamous pranks but the book appears oblivious to the fact that many of the pranks went way overboard and many of the victims considered Billington a bully. In Dynamite's own words he slipped fellow wrestler Mike Davis laxatives and as if that weren't enough poured hair remover on his head while he was passed out forcing him to leave Japan prematurely in humiliation. Billington always stresses how miserable being a pro wrestler can be so why add misery to some low card wrestler? He even found it amusing to spike Terry Funk's drinks with speed despite Funk supposedly being his friend. Billington just seemed oblivious to how his actions may affect other people. In the infamous Jacques Rougeau incident, Mr. Perfect had tricked the Rougeau Brothers into thinking the Bulldogs had damaged their wrestling outfits. They were understandably pissed and let their anger be known to other wrestlers. Dynamite responded (supposedly) by slapping Jacques around and knocking out Ray Rougeau when he tried to break up the fight. Following the incident Dynamite assumed they were now even. How the hell does that make them even? And mind you these are the details told from Dynamite's perspective. Jacques had a different recollection that made Dynamite look even worse. In Stampede, Dynamite spiked (did a legit piledriver) a wrestler he didn't like. That is incredibly dangerous and thoughtless. He was prone to punching or slapping people in the face, including Bruce Hart who was the son of Stampede's owner Stu Hart. And Dynamite seemed confused as to why more people weren't lining up to contact him post retirement. The book has a distracting amount of writing and syntax errors made more

surprising because this isn't a first edition. Any time a reference was made to wrestler David Schultz it was spelled Shults and Schultz is not an obscure wrestler. Quoting the book, "somebody, maybe one of the Guerreros had won a belt in Japan, gone to Mexico or America, and never brought it back." Taking a belt and not returning it is not the worst crime one can commit but to name a wrestler when you know you're not sure seems pretty flimsy. When I watched the Dynamite Kid in the mid 80s he was at the peak of his steroid usage and looked fantastic. This was a look I wished I could have. What I didn't realize was that Dynamite's entire existence was regulated through drugs. There were the obvious steroids but Dynamite used pain killers before and after matches, drugs to sleep and cocaine for relaxation. As if all that were not enough he also drank beer at night and smoked. It's a testament to steroids and pain killers that the Dynamite Kid could look so good and moved so well despite a horrifying abuse of his own body. Tom Billington was also not a naturally muscular fellow (look at his early and later matches) making the effects of steroids all the more impressive. The book was published when Billington was 40 and his health has only declined since then including a third stroke in 2013. I'm not sure what condition he's in now but he looked pretty awful prior to his stroke. As far as in-ring performance concerned there was no greater performer than the Dynamite Kid and despite his obvious personal failings I could watch his old matches all day long. There are stories about Dynamite Kid that are not in the book that are far more horrific than anything included, for instance a claim by Diane Hart that paints Billington as sadistic psychopath. Billington has confirmed Hart's claim. Since the book was published Davey Boy Smith has died and Chris Benoit (who received some praise) murdered his family. I would love to hear Billington's thoughts on the topics but this is likely the first and last biography from Dynamite. Surprisingly Billington seems less bitter at the business than other wrestlers who've suffered far less. Maybe deep down inside he knows he gave at least as much as he took. It's a very tragic ending for a wrestler who sacrificed his body to entertain fans but possibly the most enthralling wrestling book I've read.

Well if you do love wrestling, then this is the book for you. The Bulldogs were on top in the 80's, this book talks about Dynamite's journey before and after. Leaving nothing out, highs and lows are all there. It is written in a way that you can hear his voice while you are reading it, which is always a cool thing. If you are a fan, it is a must read.

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