

Interview with Middle Kingdom Wrestling's Big Sam

This interview is with a member of the Middle Kingdom Wrestling roster. If you're not familiar with MKW (which you very well may not be), check out some of their stuff here:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/MiddleKingdomWrestling>

Wrestling really is one of the most international sports you're ever going to find. Where else do you have so many people from so many countries coming together in almost any country with so many different styles? One of the coolest things about wrestling is seeing all these styles come together and put on a good match. It's even cooler when you get an interesting mixture of styles, which is where we are here.

You've probably seen wrestling from all over the world at one point or another. It might be the standard American style, the Mexican lucha libre style, the European technical style or something else entirely. One other place entirely is China, where professional wrestling is trying to establish itself. There is talent to be found in China and the surrounding areas, but bringing in outside help can make a difference.

One such talent is Big Sam, a British wrestler who is now performing in China. His size (6'4 and 260lbs) make him stand out with the mostly smaller members of the Middle Kingdom Wrestling roster not coming close to his physical stature. A British wrestler coming to China makes for an interesting story and I was able to get to hear some of that story. Here's an interview with Big Sam, presented in a question and answer format.

1. How did you get started in wrestling? Were you trained in England?

When I was 14/15, I trained and took part in freestyle amateur wrestling in North Wales. I wrestled mostly within the British Isles (United Kingdom of Great Britain as well as the Republic of Ireland) –
<http://www.angelfire.com/wrestling3/balvinder/index.html>

At the age of 16, I went for my first pro wrestling class held in Sheffield with Hammerlock wrestling (I believed it has closed its operations in Sheffield now). That is where I first learnt to bump and lock up. That was my first real taste of training to be a pro wrestler and I wanted more, however the distance was too far for me and it very impractical. I decided to carry on with freestyle amateur wrestling.

It was not until I was 19 that I started to train pro wrestling more regularly in Rhyl (North Wales), about an hour's drive from my home. I had a few lessons with World of Sport's legend, Orig Williams. Unfortunately these were near his latter years, and the lessons soon became inconsistent to eventually they were called off –
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orig_Williams

I found that I learnt the most wrestling at Basix Pro Wrestling, which was closer to my home and offered me more opportunities. The trainers and owner, "Iron Man" Mike Roberts ran the promotion.
http://prowrestling.wikia.com/wiki/Mike_Roberts

It was with Basix Pro Wrestling that I got debuted in my first match in front of a paying crowd in 2007. I was in a battle royal and was eliminated half-way through.

2. What brought you to China and how did your career begin there?

I came to China as an exchange student. There was nothing in the area I was at the time. I carried on teaching some freestyle wrestling while studying there. It was actually a few years later through a comedian that I got to introduced to

former WWE Cruiserweight Classic wrestler, Ho Ho Lun that I got to know there was a small but growing wrestling scene in China. Through that I got introduced to Ho Ho Lun's first trainer, The Slam. He took me and helped me shake of the 'ring rust' and had me bumping again. I wrestled for a couple of start-up promotions throughout China, before landing with Middle Kingdom Wrestling (MKW).

3. You're a good deal bigger and taller than most of the Middle Kingdom Wrestling roster. Do you feel this is a strength for you and how has it affected your in-ring style?

I am a legit 6'4" and 260lbs. I have a huge advantage working in China at this size.

In the UK, I was big but not the biggest. I would work more technical with a few power moves, I kind of brought that to China.

However, as wrestling is still not mature in China, most wrestlers I work with want to take me off my feet in seconds. Ring psychology is thrown in the garbage a lot of the time here. I was very lenient when I first came to China and was bumping a lot for much smaller guys, and I did not really embrace the big man/monster style. I blame myself that I was out of the game for a few years and was being too kind, maybe naïve. Things changed when another British wrestler (Voodoo) came who had a ton of experience and said to me "What the f**k are you doing? No one should make you bump". He would then watch every match and lay into me with strict criticism as well as suggestions. He told my opponents that they shouldn't knock me down right from the bell. I began working a larger man style, which was slower but perfecting the moves that I did. I now work a match with 4 to 5 big moves. I don't try and punch anymore because I believe if I was to punch a guy who was 150lbs he should be knocked out cleanly. I then notice other promotions wanting to book me. I tried to perfect the military press, which is probably my most over move in wrestling. I notice I have a growing fan base, and majority

are Chinese who send me messages complimenting my size, strength as well as my 'old school' style.

4. Middle Kingdom Wrestling offers a wide variety of international talent from a long list of different countries, including French, British, Chinese and Taiwanese wrestlers. How important is it to offer such a variety of talent to the audience?

China is now growing in the pro wrestling scene and is attracted a lot of interest. Chinese like wrestlers who look like WWE guys. They like John Cena, The Shield, AJ Styles and even Sheamus. There for, guys from Europe and the USA are well received, especially if they got a bit of mass to their build and an obvious gimmick.

As MKW was starting, we did not have the biggest roster so we tried to work with other promotions to help us get started. One included a local Chinese promotion, China Wrestling Entertainment (CWE) led by The Slam. Ho Ho Lun helped out as well as a Taiwanese wrestler looking for his break and a French wrestling promotion that was on their way to Thailand. Now we have wrestlers from Italy and New Zealand. We all have slightly different styles, which we try to implement. I would say my style is more American than British now.

I personally think it is important to display different styles to keep the product interesting but not go too far from the original product and the idea of professional wrestling. We have been involved in shows that have boxing, MMA, kick-boxing and other combat sports, and pro wrestling have been welcomed to it. This has been good because usually these shows have huge budgets and attract audiences that are easily 1000+. This also shows that the fans want to watch a bit of everything rather than one whole show dedicated to just one sport.

5. Wrestling doesn't have the strongest history in China. How can Middle Kingdom Wrestling expand and become a top player in

the country?

Wrestling is growing, and WWE have taken onboard several Chinese born wrestlers in their training performance center. I have been in China for several years and have witness pro wrestling growing here. I have seen promotions come and go within China as usually they fail as they try to invest too much and lose all their money after several months. MKW has been smarter than most, and is slowly building up and now have their own training center in north China. MKW has tried to make several partnerships with other promotions but have wormed out the ones who don't want to return the favour when we book and pay their wrestlers. Wrestling industry in China is becoming cut-throat now, so MKW is trying to be fair and work within our means. MKW has many wrestlers from around the world that want to work with them, however, the new strategy is to concentrate on our current product and invest their rather than spend bringing in many wrestlers from overseas like MKW did in the past.

6. Where can fans see you and all other Middle Kingdom Wrestling content?

www.MiddleKingdomWrestling.com

www.Facebook.com/MKWchina

WeChat: MKWrestling

<https://www.youtube.com/c/MiddleKingdomWrestling>