

Stars from Pro Sports, Olympics Set for Grand Re-Opening of Dan Gable Museum on January 9

Former stars from major league baseball, the NFL, the NBA, professional wrestling and the Olympic Games will be on hand for a special autograph event when the Dan Gable International Wrestling Institute & Museum holds its Grand Re-Opening on Friday, Jan. 9.

The museum, located at 303 Jefferson St. in the center of Waterloo, was virtually destroyed by the historic flood of June 10. It has been closed for six months; work on the rebuilding began in October after FEMA announced it was obligating funds for the museum, a not-for-profit business, to get back on its feet.

Scheduled to appear at the autograph session from 3-5 p.m. are Cal Eldred, who played 16 years of major league baseball (Chicago White Sox, Milwaukee Brewers and St. Louis Cardinals), Bobby Hansen who played nine years in the NBA (Utah Jazz, Chicago Bulls and Sacramento Kings) and Marv Cook, who played seven seasons in the NFL (New England Patriots, Chicago Bears and St. Louis Rams).

All three were stars at the University of Iowa, where Gable coached the wrestling team to 15 NCAA team titles in his 21 seasons as head coach. Gable is currently an associate athletic director at Iowa.

Baron Von Raschke, one of the biggest stars in professional wrestling in the 1960s and '70s, will also be at the event. Prior to entering pro wrestling, Jim Raschke was a standout amateur wrestler at the University of Nebraska. He also won a bronze medal at the amateur World Championships in 1963. He is a member of the George Tragos/Lou Thesz Professional Wrestling Hall of Fame, located in the museum.

Gable, 1972 Olympic champion, will be at the autograph event, as will former Olympic champions Bill Smith (1952), Doug Blubaugh (1960), Ben Peterson (1972), Ed Banach (1984) and Randy Lewis (1984).

Other wrestling stars scheduled to appear are Ben Askren, 2008 Olympian and two-time NCAA champion from the University of Missouri (and a two-time winner of the Dan Hodge Trophy as the top college wrestler in the country) and Chuck Yagla, a two-time NCAA champion at Iowa and 1980 Olympian.

"This is probably one of the biggest lineups of sports stars ever in the Cedar Valley area," said Kent Sesker, marketing director of the museum. "Marv, Cal and Bobby wanted to come out of respect for Coach Gable and all he has meant to sports in this state.

“We are encouraging all area sports fans to come and meet these legends. We will have a special commemorative poster with photos of all these athletes on it for fans to buy and have signed, plus various sports cards and items.”

There will also be a silent auction at the museum, lasting all day Friday and Saturday, with items from the world of sports up for sale.

The museum will open at 9 a.m. and stay open until 10 p.m. The autograph session with the stars will be from 3-5 p.m. in the Glen Brand Wrestling Hall of Fame of Iowa. Admission to the museum is \$6 for adults and \$3 for students.

The event is being co-sponsored by 1650 TheFan radio station, which carries the museum's weekly live wrestling show “On the Mat” (Wednesdays at 5 p.m.), and by MATMAN, one of the nation's leading manufacturers of wrestling attire and equipment.

“This is a great event that we are bringing to the Cedar Valley, to celebrate the grand re-opening and to show our appreciation to the many groups and volunteers that helped us fight back from this natural disaster,” said Mike Chapman, the museum's executive director.

“The flood nearly wiped us out. It destroyed our entire gift shop inventory stored in the basement, along with much of the museum's archival information and lots of memorabilia. It also took out every wall in the display area up to the four-foot mark, and all of our carpeting and office furniture and equipment.

“It's been a long, difficult fight to get back to where we were, but we will be about 90 percent back when we re-open on Jan. 9.”

The event is scheduled to coincide with the National Duals wrestling tournament, which is being hosted by UNI at the UNI-Dome on Jan. 10-11. 80 of the nation's top college wrestling teams will be competing in the Duals all day Saturday and Sunday.

The museum will also be open on Saturday and Sunday (January 10 & 11) from 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

For further information, contact the museum at 319-233-0745.