



Wrestling

with a career

in scriptwriting

Work on head-lock, then load up supermarket shelves, then edit script. *Smart Start* reports.

At Christ Church Grammar School in Perth, James Breen reckons he had no idea what he wanted to do.

After Year 12, he studied for a social science degree majoring in politics at Curtin, with the idea that he'd transfer into a psychology degree once he obtained the necessary entrance level.

In the meantime, he became involved in Perth's professional wrestling circuit. James was 'planted' in the audience as an obsessive fan of one of the wrestlers, a fan who would jump out and interfere in bouts. From obsessive fan, James took on the identity of pro-wrestler Jamie Jurah.

Where he was pretty half-hearted at uni, he loved wrestling because it was an athletic outlet, and he also was fascinated by the elements of performance and telling stories. Then it was off for nine months in wrestling schools in Canada and the US. James came back to Australia with a great experience under his belt, but new ideas.

He realised that wrestling as a career probably wasn't his goal, but he knew that the elements of story-telling were right up his alley. So it was back to Curtin, this time to study a graduate diploma in film and television. But he'd just missed out on the enrolment date.

Not to be discouraged, James worked hard for a year and saved up enough money to pay his course fees. The aim: a debt-free education.

"The film and TV course was great – it was the first thing besides wrestling that I really threw myself into," says James, 25.

He won the ScreenWest 2008 Television Writers Award for his proposed drama script about the dreams and conflicting egos of independent pro-wrestlers. His prize was a support package of \$6000 from ScreenWest - some of which is going towards employing screenwriter Kelly Lefever to help him take *The Ring* to the next level.

"I am a real fan of the US smash hits *The Wire* and *The Sopranos* which have been an inspiration for this work. While the script is partly based on some of my own experiences as a wrestler, I plan to incorporate many of the narrative techniques used in these shows into my work."

The Ring tells the stories of the wrestlers, promoters, girlfriends, trainees, and all the hard work and sacrifice it takes to put on an independent wrestling show that the community at large treats as some type of aberration.

The script explores the dreams of an eclectic set of characters and how ego, politics, and real life can conflict with their dreams.



Paying the bills

In Perth, James worked stocked shelves at night in a supermarket. This meant he could fit in study in other things during the day, and it also paid him overtime. In North America, James took on café work to pay the bills.