# WrestleMania 41 premieres on Netflix amid Vince McMahon controversy



As WrestleMania 41 is set to stream on Netflix for the first time this weekend, the spectacle of the iconic professional wrestling event is unfolding amid ongoing controversy surrounding WWE's founder, Vince McMahon. Although 72,000 fans are expected to fill Las Vegas’s Allegiant Stadium, with a global audience of around 120 million more tuning in, McMahon’s presence will notably be absent from this year’s event.

Vince McMahon, the billionaire visionary who purchased the then-World Wrestling Federation (WWF) from his father in 1982, was instrumental in transforming wrestling into a national phenomenon. By blending the athleticism of sports with the dramatic flair of soap operas, McMahon created a uniquely loud brand that captured widespread attention. He produced WrestleMania from its inception in March 1985, staging it like a Hollywood blockbuster that featured crossover stars such as Hulk Hogan, Mr T, Muhammad Ali, and Cyndi Lauper, effectively making WrestleMania a significant cultural event and the cornerstone of a billion-dollar empire.

However, McMahon’s legacy has been overshadowed by a serious legal battle. In January 2024, former WWE employee Janel Grant filed a civil lawsuit accusing McMahon of sexual misconduct, abuse, and trafficking. The lawsuit alleges that McMahon sexually abused and exploited Grant, trafficked her to other men including former WWE executive John Laurinaitis, coerced her into sexual acts with employees, and shared explicit photos and videos of her without consent. Grant claims this misconduct regularly took place on WWE premises and escalated in severity over time. WWE and Laurinaitis are named as co-defendants in the ongoing legal proceedings. McMahon has denied the accusations and subsequently stepped down from his roles at WWE and TKO Group Holdings, which owns the UFC.

Roman Reigns, the Undisputed WWE Universal Champion, spoke about the lawsuit in an interview with Vanity Fair ahead of WrestleMania 41. Discussing Grant’s situation, Reigns described the allegations as "embarrassing" and expressed hope that she is currently in a safe and stable environment. He said, "She has to carry the weight of everything she experienced, and I just hope she feels safe and comfortable wherever she is now. It's embarrassing - this isn't the kind of thing you ever want to hear about, especially with your family involved in this industry." Reigns also revealed that McMahon contacted him in 2023 to wish him a happy birthday but has otherwise distanced himself from WWE operations since his resignation.

This is the second WrestleMania since McMahon’s departure, following his fluctuating involvement amid previous controversies. In 2022, The Wall Street Journal reported that he had paid over $12 million in hush money to suppress earlier allegations of misconduct. He briefly retired but returned in early 2023 before the current lawsuit forced him out again. Moreover, a federal criminal investigation into whether McMahon attempted to cover up sexual misconduct allegations was closed in February 2024 without charges.

The current face of WWE leadership is Paul "Triple H" Levesque, McMahon’s son-in-law and chief content officer. Under Triple H, WrestleMania 41 promises a refreshed direction, focusing on elevating in-ring performance and nurturing new talent, including stars like Cody Rhodes, Rhea Ripley, and LA Knight. Rhodes recently referenced the changing era during a promo, remarking on McMahon’s absence: "They chose me... Can you say the same, John? Or was it one guy in an office who chose you - a guy we don't talk about anymore?" The statement underlines the industry’s attempt to move beyond its tumultuous past.

WrestleMania’s history is rich with memorable moments that have shaped wrestling's legacy—iconic matches such as the British Bulldogs’ tag-team triumph at WrestleMania 2, Randy Savage versus Ricky Steamboat at WrestleMania III, and The Undertaker’s legendary bout with Shawn Michaels at WrestleMania XXV continue to captivate fans. WrestleMania has been a platform for larger-than-life personalities including The Rock, John Cena, Triple H, and Brock Lesnar. Even political figures like Donald Trump have featured prominently, most notably at WrestleMania 23 in 2007, where the "Battle of the Billionaires" match culminated in McMahon’s head being shaved, with Trump’s involvement cementing the event’s mainstream appeal. Linda McMahon, Vince’s former wife, also held public office in the Trump administration as Education Secretary.

Despite these storied highlights, the current landscape faces challenges tied to longstanding issues within wrestling related to power, exploitation, and the complexities of blending performance and reality. The Netflix documentary "Mr McMahon," released in September 2024, examined the arc of Vince McMahon’s career—the highs and lows—through interviews with notable wrestlers and journalists, portraying him as a complex figure whose own creation ultimately contributed to his downfall.

Legal representatives have responded to the allegations; for example, John Laurinaitis’s lawyer Edward Brennan stated in February that Laurinaitis denies the claims and considers himself a victim in the case, asserting the truth will emerge through court proceedings rather than media coverage. Meanwhile, McMahon’s lawyer Robert Allen confirmed the closure of the criminal investigation in Manhattan without further action.

As WrestleMania 41 unfolds, WWE carries forward a storied tradition in a time of reckoning. Fans worldwide will witness high-calibre wrestling moments on the grand stage, while the events behind the scenes continue to shape the organisation’s future trajectory.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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