

= TNA World Heavyweight Championship =

The TNA World Heavyweight Championship is a professional wrestling world heavyweight championship owned by Total Nonstop Action Wrestling ( TNA ) . It is currently the highest ranked championship in TNA and is primarily defended in TNA 's heavyweight division . It was unveiled on May 14 , 2007 , at the taping of TNA 's primary television program , TNA Impact ! ; this episode of Impact ! did not air until May 17 , 2007 . The inaugural champion was Kurt Angle .

Like most professional wrestling championships , the title is won via the result of a scripted match . Before the TNA World Heavyweight Championship was created , TNA held control over the NWA World Heavyweight Championship due to an agreement between TNA and the National Wrestling Alliance ( NWA ) , the organization which owned the NWA Championship . In 2007 , the agreement between TNA and the NWA ended , leading to the creation of the TNA World Heavyweight Championship .

= = History = =

The Total Nonstop Action Wrestling promotion formed in May 2002 . Later that same year TNA was granted control over the NWA World Heavyweight and World Tag Team Championships by the National Wrestling Alliance ( NWA ) governing body ; subsequently becoming an official NWA territory as NWA ? TNA . On June 19 , 2002 , NWA ? TNA held its first show ; a weekly pay @-@ per @-@ view ( PPV ) event . The main event of the telecast was a twenty @-@ man Gauntlet for the Gold match in which twenty men trying to throw each other over the top rope and down to the floor in order to eliminate them , until there were two men left who wrestle a standard match to become the first ever TNA @-@ era NWA World Heavyweight Champion . Ken Shamrock defeated Malice to win the vacant championship with Ricky Steamboat as Special Guest Referee at the event .

= = = Creation = = =

The NWA World Heavyweight and World Tag Team Championships were contested for in TNA until the morning of May 13 , 2007 . On that day , NWA 's Executive Director Robert Trobich announced that the NWA were ending their five ? year agreement with TNA , which had allowed them full control over both titles . Trobich went on to state that effective that morning , then @-@ NWA World Heavyweight Champion Christian Cage and the Team 3D pairing of Brother Ray and Brother Devon , then @-@ NWA World Tag Team Champions , were stripped of their respective championships . The alleged motivation behind these actions was because Cage refused to defend the NWA World Heavyweight Championship against wrestlers from NWA territories . That same day , TNA were scheduled to produce their Sacrifice 2007 PPV event , in which both Cage and Team 3D were to defend their respective championships . On the card , Cage was scheduled to defend the NWA World Heavyweight Championship against Kurt Angle and Sting in a match involving three competitors , also known as a Three Way match .

That night , the onscreen graphic used to refer to the champions and their respective championships credited both Cage and Team 3D as still being NWA Champions . However , the ring announcers for the encounters proclaimed the matches as being strictly for the " World Heavyweight Championship " and the " World Tag Team Championship " . Angle defeated Cage and Sting to win the " World Heavyweight Championship " .

TNA held a set of tapings for the next two episodes of TNA Impact ! on May 14 , with the episodes set to air on tape delay on May 17 and May 24 , 2007 . At the first taping , Angle came to the ring with the new TNA World Heavyweight Championship belt and announced that he was the " new TNA World Heavyweight Champion " . TNA commentator Mike Tenay announced when Angle made his way to the ring that Management Director Jim Cornette , TNA 's on @-@ screen authority figure at the time , " made the decision that due to TNA 's growing worldwide exposure , the company needed to have its own TNA title belts " ; thereby not acknowledging the NWA ending their

agreement with TNA and giving a storyline explanation as to why the championship was created . Later on during the broadcast , Cornette stripped Angle of the TNA World Heavyweight Championship due to a controversial finish to the match at Sacrifice . Cornette then announced the championship would be contested for at TNA 's Slammiversary PPV event on June 17 , 2007 in a King of the Mountain match ? a match which involves five participants racing to gain a pinfall or submission to become eligible to hang a championship belt to win . On May 15 , 2007 Jeremy Borash unveiled the TNA World Heavyweight Championship belt on that day 's edition of TNA 's online podcast TNA Today .

The five participants for the King of the Mountain match were determined in a series of standard wrestling matches that took place on Impact ! leading up to the event . Angle defeated Rhino in the first bout to gain entry on the May 17 episode of Impact ! . On May 24 episode of Impact ! , Samoa Joe defeated Sting to become the second participant . The third qualification match was held on the May 31 episode of Impact ! between AJ Styles and Tomko , which Styles won . The next bout pitted Chris Harris against James Storm on the June 7 episode Impact ! , which ended in a double disqualification ; neither man advanced to the King of the Mountain match . The final qualification match was won by Christian Cage over Abyss on the June 14 episode of Impact ! . Angle ended up winning the King of the Mountain match at Slammiversary over Joe , Cage , Styles , and Harris , who was a mystery participant chosen by Cornette , to become the " undisputed TNA World Heavyweight Champion " .

= = Belt design = =

During the championship 's history , it has had three designs . The original belt , unveiled in May 2007 , had on its center plate an imprint of an eagle with its wings extended . The word " World " was placed above the eagle 's head on a ribbon . The ribbon was wrapped around the bird 's wings and body . Five stars were engraved on the ribbon when it passed over each of the bird 's wings and the word " Champion " as it passed over the bird 's talons . The words " Heavyweight Wrestling " were printed across the bird 's chest . At the top of the center plate , was TNA 's logo . Four smaller side plates had an imprint of a globe centered with TNA 's logo at the top and bottom of each . At each end of the belt was a small plate that covered the belt snaps with TNA 's logo engraved on each . [ 1 ]

At the November 8 , 2010 , tapings of the November 11 edition of Impact ! , TNA introduced a new design for the TNA World Heavyweight Championship belt , which the champion Jeff Hardy dubbed the " Immortal Championship " . The new design consisted of a purple strap with a silver center plate depicting a masked head ( designed to resemble Hardy 's face with face paint ) , the TNA logo on the forehead and blue lines along the mask . There are four irregular dodecagonal side plates on the belt , shaped like stars with rounded edges on two of the sides of these plates .

The Immortal belt was replaced by the third design of the belt at the March 14 , 2011 , tapings of the March 17 edition of Impact ! , introduced by the reigning champion at the time , Sting . The new design features seven gold plates over a black leather strap . The largest plate is the center plate with faux diamonds aligned along its multiple rounded edges , similar to that of the Big Gold Belt . Over the center plate is a large TNA Wrestling logo and below it the words " Heavyweight Champion " are engraved in silver . On each side of the center plate is a group of three smaller plates , one with a TNA logo engraved while the other two feature separate corresponding halves of a globe , on either side of the TNA logo side plate .

= = Reigns = =

Overall , there have been 33 reigns shared among 18 wrestlers . The inaugural champion was Kurt Angle , who won the championship by defeating Christian Cage and Sting in a Three Way match on May 13 , 2007 , at TNA 's Sacrifice event . Angle 's first reign also holds the record for shortest reign in the title 's history at 1 day . Angle also holds the record for the most reigns at six . At 256 days , Bobby Roode 's first reign is the longest in the title 's history . The title has been vacated three

different times .

Lashley is the current champion in his third reign . He defeated Drew Galloway to win the title on June 12 , 2016 , in Orlando , Florida at Slammiversary .