

= World Heavyweight Championship ( WWE ) =

The World Heavyweight Championship was a professional wrestling world heavyweight championship owned by WWE . It was one of two top championships in WWE , complementing the WWE World Championship . It was established under the Raw brand in 2002 , after Raw and SmackDown ! became distinct brands under WWE , and moved between both brands on different occasions ( mainly as a result of the WWE draft ) until August 29 , 2011 when all programming became full roster " supershows " . The World Heavyweight Championship was retired at the WWE PPV TLC : Tables , Ladders , and Chairs on December 15 , 2013 when it was unified with the WWE Championship .

The title was one of six to be represented by the historic Big Gold Belt , first introduced in 1986 . Its heritage can be traced back to the first world heavyweight championship , thereby giving the belt a legacy over 100 years old , the oldest in the world .

= = History = =

= = = Origin = = =

WWE introduced its World Heavyweight Championship in 2002 , by Eric Bischoff with Triple H becoming the inaugural champion on September 2 . However , its origin is attributed the first world heavyweight championship , and then to events that began in the National Wrestling Alliance ( NWA ) , which had many different territorial promotions as members . In the late 1980s , World Championship Wrestling ( WCW ) was a member of the NWA , having been formed by the purchase of Jim Crockett Promotions ( JCP ) , which had absorbed many other NWA members , by Turner Broadcasting , which aired WCW 's programming . During this time , WCW used the NWA World Heavyweight Championship as its world title . The WCW World Heavyweight Championship was soon established when the recognition was awarded to then @-@ NWA World Heavyweight Champion Ric Flair in 1991 . In 1993 , WCW seceded from the NWA and grew to become a rival promotion to the World Wrestling Federation ( WWF ) , itself a former member of the NWA . Both organizations grew into mainstream prominence and were eventually involved in a television ratings war dubbed the Monday Night Wars . Near the end of the ratings war , WCW began a financial decline which culminated in March 2001 with the WWF 's purchase of selected assets of WCW . As a result of the purchase , the WWF acquired the video library of WCW , select talent contracts , and championships among other assets . The slew of former WCW talent joining the WWF roster began " The Invasion " which effectively phased out the WCW name . Following this , the WCW World Heavyweight Championship was unified with the WWF Championship , the WWF 's world title , at Vengeance in December . At the event , the WCW World Heavyweight Championship was decommissioned with Chris Jericho becoming the final WCW World Heavyweight Champion and the subsequent Undisputed WWF Champion after defeating The Rock and Steve Austin respectively . The WWF title became the undisputed Championship in professional wrestling until September 2002 with the creation of this World Heavyweight Championship , spun off from the Undisputed WWE Championship as the successor to the WCW World Heavyweight Championship .

= = = Creation = = =

By 2002 , the WWE roster had doubled in size due to the overabundance of contracted workers . As a result of the increase , the WWE divided the roster through its two main television programs , Raw and SmackDown , assigning championships and appointing figureheads to each brand . This expansion became known as the " Brand Extension " . In May 2002 , the WWF was renamed to World Wrestling Entertainment ( WWE ) . Following these changes , the Undisputed WWE Championship remained unaffiliated with either brand as competitors from both brands could challenge the Undisputed Champion . Following the appointment of Eric Bischoff and Stephanie

McMahon as General Managers of the Raw and SmackDown brands respectively , Stephanie McMahon contracted then @-@ champion Brock Lesnar to the SmackDown brand , leaving the Raw brand without a World Title . On September 2 , after disputing the brand designation of the Undisputed title , Eric Bischoff announced the creation of the World Heavyweight Championship . Bischoff awarded the title to Triple H due to previously being Lesnar 's scheduled opponent . Immediately afterwards , the Undisputed Championship returned to being the WWE Championship .

= = = Historical lineage = = =

While introduced in 2002 as a new title , the WWE often made allusions often being made to other titles including those of WCW and the NWA , amalgamating the history of this championship with the history of the belt that represents it . As affirmed by WWE , the World Heavyweight Championship is not a continuation of the WCW Championship , but rather its successor by way of the WWE Undisputed Championship , just as the WCW Championship spun off from the NWA World Heavyweight Championship . Due to its relation to both titles , its lineage is connected with the earliest recognized world heavyweight championship . In 2009 , WWE released a DVD set called History of the World Heavyweight Championship that definitively linked the title to the WCW and NWA titles .

= = = Brand designation history = = =

The following is a list of dates indicating the transitions of the World Heavyweight Championship between the Raw and SmackDown ! brands .

= = Reigns = =

The inaugural champion was Triple H , and there were 25 different champions overall . The longest reigning champion was Batista who held the title from April 3 , 2005 to January 10 , 2006 for a total of 282 days . Triple H holds the record for longest combined reigns at 616 days . The shortest reigning champion was Big Show who officially held the title for 45 seconds . The youngest champion was Randy Orton , who won the title of the age of 24 . The oldest champion was The Undertaker who won at the age of 44 . Edge held the title the most times with seven championship reigns . There were five vacancies throughout the title 's history .

Randy Orton was the final champion in his fourth reign . He defeated John Cena in a TLC match at TLC : Tables , Ladders and Chairs on December 15 , 2013 in Houston , Texas to unify the WWE and World Heavyweight Championships .