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Wrestler was uneasy about stunt

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The family of a professional wrestler who was killed when he fell during a stunt high above the ring says the wrestling federation took too many chances with wrestlers' safety.

Owen Hart, member of a prominent Canadian wrestling family, plummeted 70 feet or more to his death Sunday at Kemper Arena in Kansas City as he was being lowered into the ring from the arena's ceiling. At the World Wrestling Federation's event the next night, held in St. Louis, some wrestlers wept openly, as did some of the 19,000 fans at the sold-out Kiel Center.

Hart's brother Bret, also a wrestling star, told "Good Morning America" today that his brother had been worried about the stunt.

"This idea was taken to him," Bret Hart said. "There was a bit of discomfort about the danger in it. But somehow over the weekend he got talked into doing it again. He was very uneasy about it."

He said there should have been "some kind of a safety cable."

"We're professional wrestlers; we take our falls on the mat, inside the ring," Hart said. "I was never a stuntman, and my brother Owen was never a stuntman. He never should have been put in a situation where he was up on the top of a ceiling of an arena to go into the ring."

Bret Hart, known as "The Hitman," is a star on the World Championship Wrestling circuit, rival to his brother's organization, the World Wrestling Federation. They are sons of Stu Hart, a member of Canada's Olympic wrestling team in the 1940s. All seven of his sons went into wrestling.

Ellie Hart, a sister, said both organizations were trying more and more tricky stunts to attract fans.

"Frankly, wrestling was getting so far out and my poor brother Owen was a sacrifice for the ratings, that's how I look at it," she said Monday.

"They kept on getting more and more far out with the gimmicks and angles. . . . We figured sooner or later somebody was going to end up with a tragedy because of the direction wrestling was taking with both WWF and WCW."

Wade Keller, editor of the Pro Wrestling Torch newsletter, said it was the first fatal accident he knew of in U.S.

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wrestling since 1969, when Mike DiBiase died of a heart attack during a match in Texas.

Police spokesman Floyd Mitchell said homicide detectives were inspecting Hart's rigging and talking to the stagehands to determine what went wrong.

Mitchell said the cable did not break, and detectives believe Hart's harness may have been hitched incorrectly.

WWF President Vince McMahon said he believes Hart may have accidentally pulled a release mechanism.

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