

# Crown drops charges against Teddy Hart of famed wrestling can

Chris Purdy, THE CANADIAN PRESS

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SHERWOOD PARK, Alta. — The Crown has dropped criminal charges against Teddy Hart, a member of Canada's legendary Hart wrestling family and known for his daredevil antics both inside and outside the ring as well as for his breeding of Persian cats.

Hart, whose legal name is Edward Annis, was charged with assault, unlawful confinement and sexual assault against two women in Sherwood Park, just east of Edmonton, in 2013 and 2014.

The charges were withdrawn at the start of a preliminary hearing May 26.

A spokeswoman with Alberta Justice says the Crown determined after a review that the case did not meet the criteria needed to proceed.

Lawyer Kent Teskey says his client had always maintained his innocence.

"Teddy has had this fog of charges over him for a year and a half," Teskey said Thursday.

"He's relieved and looks forward to getting back to work."

The same day the charges were withdrawn, Hart signed a peace bond agreeing not to contact the two women for two years. Teskey said Hart has no interest in contacting the complainants.

Hart, 36, is the grandson of Stu Hart, founder of Calgary's Stampede Wrestling, and nephew of famed wrestler Bret (The Hitman) Hart.

At 18, he became the youngest wrestler to sign with what is now World Wrestling Entertainment. He later worked on other wrestling circuits in the United States, Mexico and Europe.

A March profile in Rolling Stone magazine detailed his eclectic lifestyle. He also has a side-career breeding Persian cats.

A pilot for a reality show about Hart, titled "Hart Attack," was filmed but never aired. A description of the show says Hart "lived in a mansion filled with models, bikers and 50 Persian show cats."

A producer of the show, Kurt Spenrath, is making a short documentary about Hart called "Hart of Darkness."

Spenrath said that since the charges were withdrawn, Hart has received more wrestling offers. There are also plans for him to open a wrestling school in Los Angeles.

"He certainly seems to be reinvigorated in his career, strangely enough," said Spenrath. "Promoters from all over North America have been scrambling for him."

Teskey said Hart lived in Sherwood Park during the time of the women's allegations.

Hart was in Texas when he was charged by RCMP in late 2014 and returned to Canada to turn himself in.

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