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"The World's Strongest Man" gets under way this week at Commerce Casino and will air on ESPN and the U.K.'s Channel 5. Viewers in more than 100 countries will get a chance to see brawny men toss and heave weighty objects during the 35th anniversary of the event. The decision to host "Strongest Man" was a no-brainer for Commerce Casino. Gloria Hammelef, marketing director of the SoCal casino, says it will give her venue valuable international exposure. "When you've got that kind of exposure on the table -- especially considering our clientele is a bit of a men's locker room -- it doesn't take long to make the call," Hammelef says with a laugh. The event began as an incredible pitch. "A friend of mine, a roommate from college, came to me one day, and he said, 'I've got this guy who does strongman tricks,' " says sports media pro Barry Frank. "And one thing this guy did was jump off a 10-foot-high table with a rope around his neck -- and survive." His response? "That's a great idea, but who's going to pay the insurance?" Frank, then president of CBS Sports, had no idea how prescient his question would be. During the first competition, Italian bodybuilder Franco Columbu stumbled and dislocated his leg while racing with a refrigerator strapped on his back. He received \$1 million for that mishap. And the network got a lot of priceless notoriety in return. "All the publicity we got for (Columbu) beating us out of a million dollars and running with a fridge on his back was incredible," says Frank, now IMG Media's exec VP of sports programming. "People wanted to see that!" (For the record, he still maintains that Columbu would have been fine if he had followed directions.) Frank produced many other sports shows, including "Survival of the Fittest" and "Skins," but "The World's Strongest Man" holds a special place in his heart. "Of all the shows I've done, this is the most fun," Frank says. "It's so far from what a normal human can do. . .it's simply surreal."

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