

I said I don't want to worry about crashes.
Now I don't worry about crashes.
The master has spoken.



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MSN EXCLUSIVE: Interview with TNA star Daniels

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Here we are, right on the eve of TNA's big debut for Hulk Hogan Monday and Off the Mat had the opportunity to speak with one of the promotion's hottest and most talented stars, Daniels.

Along with A.J. Styles and Matt Morgan, Daniels has been singled out as one of TNA's homegrown talents in line for a big main event push in 2010.

That's a big feat in a company that's laying a lot on the line bringing in veteran talent to compete with WWE in television ratings.

Hogan's debut Monday on Spike TV isn't a threat to Daniels, who's been with TNA nearly since the promotion began in 2002. In fact, Daniels says he's looking forward to it.

"I'm not really sure what the end result will be, but I'm interested in what (Hulk Hogan) brings to the table," Daniels said from his home in Los Angeles.

"You can't deny that just by his signing, we have a spotlight like we didn't have two months ago. I'm looking forward to building the TNA brand, and I'm definitely looking forward to what he brings in the process."

In the meantime, Daniels says he's going to continue to compete at the same top-notch level that's made the Fallen Angel a star in TNA.

"My main goal is to stay in the world title picture," he said.

"I've had two title shots in the last two months, and I'll keep wrestling guys like A.J. Styles and Kurt Angle, which is great now especially with the increased spotlight."



ABOUT THE SUPERFAN

Matt Chiappardi

Matt is a lifelong pro wrestling fan, who started watching when the only bouts you could see were on an independent TV station in New Jersey on Fridays at midnight. He's old enough to (vaguely) remember the territory system, collects wrestling DVDs from all over the world.

From WWE to TNA, Ring of Honor, indie hardcore, luchadores from Mexico, or wrestling from Japan, he can't get enough of it all.

Matt is a writer and college instructor who recently worked in the industry. He lives in Trenton, N.J.

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TNA's great strength is pure wrestling and having talent like Daniels at the top of the card when media attention is starting to really focus on the promotion could give Impact! a real edge when it comes to the in-ring product.

Daniels agrees, especially since his current program involves an old foe, the current TNA World Heavyweight Champion A.J. Styles.

"It was definitely my good fortune to have A.J. Styles as the champion just because of the history between me and him," Daniels said.

"We've wrestled literally all over the world in a bunch of different places and we both have sort of a similar style and the same philosophy as far as wrestling goes. We both subscribe to the idea that if we can make the other guy look good, it's going to work."

Daniels and Styles indeed have a history. Not only have the two been going at it for years in TNA in both the X Division and now for the world championship, they've met in [Ring of Honor](#), World Wrestling All Stars, [NWA](#) and in a number of other international promotions.

Here's a great example of what they can do in the ring: A 30-minute Ironman match for the X Division title between the two from TNA Against All Odds 2005



It's not only Styles who Daniels feels brings out the best in him. He counts former Ring of Honor stars Bryan Danielson and Lo-Ki, the latter of the two who spent two years in TNA, as other who he gels with well.

And one can't forget another big man in TNA who Daniels says compliments him in the ring, Samoa Joe.

"I've had the same sort of feeling with Joe as with A.J.," he said. "We compliment each other's style. One thing about Joe is that he hits hard. You've got to be willing to take some hard strikes if you're in the ring with him. All the better, it makes the match look good."

Check out this meeting between Daniels and Joe from a [Maryland Championship Wrestling](#) event in 2006.



The above match comes from a time when TNA would regularly loan their talent out to a number of independent promotions, but the wrestlers' style still remains the same.

It's style that is one of the big bonuses TNA has over WWE, Daniels said. Unlike the bigger company, wrestlers are rarely asked to tone down their show in order not to take moxy away from guys in the main event.

"There are no handcuffs and no limitations as to what we do," Daniels said. "We had X Division guys at the top of their ability and they weren't told to slow down or take it easy. TNA just let those gys go out there and do what they did best. There wasn't anything they weren't allowed to do."

"If you want to see pro wrestling, TNA has got the better product in the ring," Daniels added.

The philosophy Daniels talks about came to a peak in 2005 when he participated in perhaps the greatest match in the promotion's history.

The Three-Way match for the X Division Championship that pitted A.J. Styles, Daniels and Samoa Joe all together at Unbreakable 2005 marks, to Daniels, a great example of what TNA can do.

For the first, and only, time the X Division program had eclipsed the heavyweight division.

"They gave us the opportunity and we just went with it.," Daniels said. "They put is in the main event, which wasn't normal procedure. And it's the only time they've done that with the X Division title. You put us in there, give us the ball, and we'll run with it each time."

"It still stands as one of the best matches in company history."

You didn't think we'd let you go without seeing that match, would you?



Daniels wasn't always billed as Daniels in his history in TNA. He used to be announced as "The Fallen Angel" Christopher Daniels. Fallen Angel may perhaps be reference to a stable he lead while in Ring of Honor called "The Prophecy."

Dropping the "Christopher" wasn't his decision, but the idea is fine with him.

"It was a TNA decision, but something I'm willing to try," Daniels said. "Whatever they decide to call me, I do what I do best and that's wrestle."

He also had a brief stint under a mask, wrestling as Curry Man, a colorful character who came to the ring with (ahem) a plate of curry strapped to his head.

That was a charatcer Daniels took with him from his days wrestling in Japan and was a bit of a diversion from The Fallen Angel's normally brooding persona.

"I enjoyed doing Curry Man when I did because it was a break from being such a serious person," Daniels said. "I do feel like being Christopher Daniels is easier. It's just more me. I'm more relaxed and confident doing my own thing."

Here's a quick look at Curry Man's TNA debut.



Curry Man is supposedly based on a Japanese anime character named Curry Cook, and that perhaps speaks to Daniels' second love after wrestling.

If he hadn't become a pro wrestler 17 years ago, Daniels says he'd be trying his hand in the comic book industry.

"I grew up reading comic books and being a big comic mark," he said. "I might have tried my hand at comics on some level, maybe trying to write. I sort of feel like pro wrestling is as close to real life superheroes as you're going to get. It's interesting."

There's a cross section of fans out there who are into both."

Comic books and superheroes likely played a large influence on Daniels' in-ring persona, but beyond that, Daniels says the wrestlers he patterned his style after were guys like Sean Waltman (X-Pac) and Shawn Michaels.

"When I was coming up, the cruiserweight scene wasn't a scene at that point, and here were these guys who weren't 6-foot 8 or 300 pounds making their way," Daniels said, "Suddenly I felt (being a succesful wrestler) was an attainable goal for me. Sean Waltman was the first guy I knew who was under 200 pounds or at least around that weight class. And Shawn Michaels, not only was he successful with smaller guys, but all over. Those were the guys I watched, and those were the guys I patterned my career after."

That career has made Daniels something of a leader in the TNA locker room. Being with the company since its inception helps, but the nearly two decades of experience Daniels brings to the ring is really what carries the weight with some of TNA's younger talent.

"People look at me in terms of my experience," Daniels said, "I've been wrestling for 17 years and the younger guys do want my opinion. I try to give them advice based on my experience. As far as management is concerned, I think they look at me as someone with loyalty to the brand."

The loyalty, along with talent and perseverance, has paid off as Daniels is set to be right in the main event picture when many eyes turn to the product Monday.

And who knows, maybe The Fallen Angel might be wearing TNA heavyweight gold before 2010 is finished.

"I hope so," he said, "I feel I've proven I can wrestle at that level. I'm just going to keep broadening the scope of the people I'm up against whether its a D'Angelo Dinero or a Matt Morgan or maybe even Hulk Hogan. It's just a matter of what TNA decides to put in front of me. A world title would really cap off 17 years of professional wrestling."

"I want to thank the TNA fans first of all, and I hope everyone watches Jan. 4. The game is going to change now that we have some new people and some new faces."

See Daniels on a special three-hour TNA Impact! Monday on Spike TV at 8 p.m. You can also see Daniels every Thursday night on TNA Impact! on Spike TV at 9 p.m. ET

Follow Daniels on Twitter at [facdaniels](#)

Check out some of Daniels clothes and gear at [Eruption Clothing Inc.](#)

Want to dress like Curry Man? Then check this out. [Spice Wear 24-7](#)

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