

Pure Entertainment RRA BROADWAY ACROSS AMERICA CHICAGO starring Sofia Vergara May 26-31 Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County

SERVICES | SUBSCRIPTIONS | DIGITAL NEWSPAPER | ADVERTISE | MIAMI.COM | MOMSMIAMI.COM | DATA SLEUTH | ELNUEVOHERALD.COM

Online Exclusive!
Time's running out.
 Get our Most Popular Online Phone - the **Nokia 6205** today!
WITH NEW 2-YR. ACTIVATION
Free Overnight Shipping with online orders


 Learn More

The Miami Herald > Sports > Wrestling

Wrestling

Friday, 05.22.09 Welcome Guest Login Register


 **Current: 78°**
 85° / 72°
 Complete Forecast

HOME DELIVERY
 Sunday's
 Miami Herald
 6 Months for \$20! 

HOME | NEWS | SPORTS | ENTERTAINMENT | BUSINESS | LIVING | OPINION | JOBS | CARS | REAL ESTATE | SHOP | CLASSIFIEDS

Dolphins | Heat | Marlins | Panthers | UM | FIU | UF | FSU | Colleges | High Schools | Golf | Tennis | Soccer | Auto Racing | Other

Posted on Friday, 05.22.09

  Recommend (0) share email print comment reprint

Stage acting leads to ring acting for TNA's Daniels

BY JIM VARSALLONE
 JVARSA@MIAMIHERALD.COM

TNA Wrestling star Christopher Daniels as Master Thespian.

Most wrestlers have athletic backgrounds, but portraying Romeo, Jonathan Harker and Alan Strang, the theater is where Daniels got his start.

OK, he did play soccer in high school, but the drama club took precedent over fútbol.

Born in Kalamazoo, Michigan, his family moved to Fayetteville, North Carolina when he was very young, and he grew up there.

Daniels played fullback and keeper at Pine Forest High School in Northern Cumberland County, North Carolina. He enjoyed soccer, but MLS and U.S. soccer were not his dreams.

"My plan was to be a comic book artist," Daniels, 37, said, "but I realized around 11th grade that I wasn't very good at all."

Daniels turned to acting.

"So I got to into theater as a senior," he said, "and I went into college trying to be an actor."

Daniels enrolled in Memphis College in Fayetteville, earning a degree in theater.

"I tried playing soccer, but college soccer is a lot different from high school soccer," he said. "I didn't really have the chops for it. I got out of sports when I was a sophomore in college."

Daniels loved to act and even met his wife, Lisa, through acting. She aspired to make the big screen.

Daniels worked in summer stock theater in North Carolina, before moving to Chicago. Living in the Windy City with hopes of becoming an accomplished actor, another form of acting caught his eye.

"The funny thing about it, my wife and I were both actors," he said. "She wasn't my wife at the time, and I sort of told her, tongue and cheek, that if it didn't work out for me, I could always be a pro wrestler."

So Lisa found a pro wrestling school in Chicago, aptly named Windy City Wrestling.

"It was close to where we lived," he recalled. "She got me an interview with the guy who ran the school. She said I came out of there with stars in my eyes, like I was hooked."

Daniels was.

He began training in January 1993. He had his first match three months later. Sam DeCero, the founder of Windy City Wrestling who was trained by Randy Savage, trained Daniels. DeCero wrestled in the AWA, before turning to teaching. Mike Anthony and Kevin Quinn also helped Daniels.

Daniels said, "The other guy who really helped formulate a lot of my career was Mike Moran."

Moran competed as one of the Texas Hangmen. He also spent some time in WCW as one-half of Disorderly Conduct. Daniels' curiosity in the sport manifested from his youth. There were similarities to the over-the-top characters in pro wrestling and those in the comic books, another of Daniels' loves.

"I grew up in Fayetteville, and that was the hot bed of the NWA, Mid-Atlantic," he said. "I grew up watching Ric Flair, Magnum T.A., Sting, The Road Warriors, Dusty Rhodes."

 The Miami Herald  Web Search powered by YAHOO!

Search

Daniels, who is 6-0, 220 pounds, considered wrestling after seeing some lighter wrestlers succeed.

"In the 70s, early 80s, there wasn't a place for guys who were 200 pounds," he said. "The Road Warriors, Sting, The Barbarian. Those type of guys, the stereotypical guys, the big muscular guys were the ones on top."

"It wasn't until guys like Shawn Michaels and Sean Waltman who started making their names and success despite the fact that they didn't tower over their opposition. They were only 200, 210 pounds."

"Windy City realized not everybody walking through the door was going to be 6-4, 260. So they had different belts in their organization. They had a heavyweight, a middleweight and a lightweight belt."

"When I started training, I was a lightweight. All I thought about was how was I going to be in Windy City. All I really knew was Windy City."

Daniels took to wrestling rather quickly.

"Growing up, watching it helped. I sort of had an idea of what they were trying to teach me and what it looked like," he said. "I was athletically inclined, despite the fact I didn't play a lot of sports. I understood the idea of the discipline of coming in and showing up on time and paying attention and putting the nose to the grind. That part of it was pretty easy to me. It was just a matter of getting the time in the ring."

Fortunately, Daniels lived close enough to be there three to four times a week during his first year of training.

While in Windy City, through Moran, Daniels received a call to work for the legendary Carlos Colon in his company WWC in Puerto Rico.

"That was my first taste of wrestling as a job, as a career," he said. "They were running five shows a week, and I stayed there a couple of months. That was when I realized it was possible for me to make a living at this. At that point, it wasn't a very big living. At the same time, it was wrestling as a job rather than as a hobby."

"Once I got back to Chicago, that was the time for me to seek places around the U.S. that I can get involved with."

Working in Puerto Rico for Colon is an experience.

Daniels said, "That was a big deal to me. I got to meet Carlos and all the guys I heard about, the stars of Puerto Rico, interacting with them and wrestling with them. I learned a lot. They taught me a lot."

"A lot of what I learned in pro wrestling happened on the road and in the ring. It didn't just happen at the wrestling school. Puerto Rico was a big part of my learning experience."

The Texas Hangmen with Moran were big in WWC. Moran recommended Daniels and Quinn as a tag team in WWC. They worked as Overkill, a name chosen by Daniels from the comic book Spawn. [Overkill was an armor-plated assassin.]

"We had a long program with Invader I and Hurricane Castillo -- aside from Carlos Colon -- two of the biggest names in WWC."

A few years later, Daniels and his wife moved to California so she could further her acting career. Working Lucha Libre, Daniels met Victor Quinones, a big name in Japan and a promoter in Puerto Rico. Quinones introduced Daniels to Taka Michinoku who got Daniels to Japan and his first match on WWE television.

In 2000, Daniels battled Michinoku for the WWF Light Heavyweight Championship in his Fallen Angel gimmick on WWF Shotgun Saturday Night.

"There's a small comic book series called Fallen Angels," Daniels said, "and that's where I had the idea to be Fallen Angel."

Daniels also tagged with Aaron Aguilera as the Los Conquistadores in the WWF.

"I portrayed a Conquistador for a good friend of mine, Christian," Daniels said. "I got to play him as a Conquistador when he was a doing it for [WWF]."

Uno or Dos?

"We were Dos."

Edge (and Aguilera) were Uno.

"We got a chance to do a lot of stuff backstage with [Edge and Christian]," Daniels said. "I didn't really know Christian that well at the time, but that's where he and I sort of got to know each other."

"It was cool because they gave us an opportunity to be in the inner workings of this angle, but at the same time, we were bit parts in that saga between them and The Hardy Boys."

Working throughout the world on the indie scene, Daniels enjoyed tremendous success in Ring of Honor through 2002-07. He worked for hardcore groups like ECW and XPW and also worked internationally -- in

Japan and the Frontier Wrestling Alliance in England.

Daniels worked a few matches in 2000. He was offered a short-term contract with WCW in 2001, but it was at the end of WCW's time. WWE stepped in and purchased the fledgling company for cheap but not his contract.

The Fallen Angel Christopher Daniels struck a chord with audiences. The character worked. Linked to Curry Man and Suicide, Daniels proved his diversity in character development in TNA.

"Fallen Angel is still near and dear to my heart," Daniels said. "I always thought that had potential to be something pretty big, depending if the right push was behind it.

"It never really materialized the way I wanted it to, but I got a chance to work a lot of different places and a lot of different incarnations of the character, and I had a lot of success with it.

"That's still my baby."

- Daniels is a six-time TNA tag team champion (with Low Ki, Elix Skipper, James Storm and A.J. Styles) and four-time TNA X Division champ.

He is a two-time ROH tag team champ (Donovan Morgan and Matt Sydal). He is a FWA British champ and an IWGP Junior Heavyweight tag team champion with Bryan Danielson in New Japan Pro Wrestling.

He is a two-time ECWA Super 8 Tournament winner, recognizing the best indie talent in the nation. He was a NWA Midwest tag team champ and WWC tag team champ with Kevin Quinn.

- Daniels has a tattoo on his sternum of an ankh, the Ancient Egyptian hieroglyph signifying life.
- In college (1989-91), Daniels portrayed Romeo in Romeo and Juliet. He played Alan Strang in Equus and Vladimir in Waiting for Godot. At Cape Fear Regional Theatre in 1991, he was Jonathan Harker in a production of Dracula that Tom Savini directed.
- Christopher and Lisa have two children, Jerica Ellen, 5, and Joshua Allen, 3. Joshua's middle name is in honor of Daniels' best friend A.J. Styles.

"The first time he and I ever wrestled was at the NWA 53rd anniversary show in Tampa," Daniels said. "That was the first time I'd actually met A.J.

"I had heard of A.J. from WCW, and he and I just got along pretty well the first time we met. Soon after that, we got to wrestle each other a couple of times in California for the big King of the Indies Tournament that APW ran.

"Not too long after that, we started doing a lot of stuff together. Promoters would bring us in as the match for their shows."

In November 2001, Daniels wrestled Styles at the XWF tapings, run by Jimmy Hart, Greg Valentine, Brian Knobbs and Hulk Hogan at Soundstage 21 at Universal Studios Orlando, the same place where TNA tapes iMPACT.

- TNA iMPACT! is 9 p.m. EST Thursdays on Spike TV.
- TNA's pay-per-view Sacrifice is 8 p.m. EST Sunday, May 24 at the TNA Impact! Zone at Soundstage 21 of Universal Studios Orlando.

TNA champ Mick Foley vs. Kurt Angle vs. Sting vs. Jeff Jarrett. Daffney (with Abyss) vs. Taylor Wilde. Beer Money, Inc. (Robert Roode and James Storm) vs. The British Invasion (Brutus Magnus and Doug Williams).

Legends champ A.J. Styles vs. Booker T in an I Quit match. TNA women's champ Angelina Love vs. Awesome Kong. Kevin Nash vs. Samoa Joe.

In the free pre-show, Amazing Red battles Kiyoshi.

- Lisa did some stand-in work for television and movies. She appeared in Chicken Soup for the Soul on PAX TV and Kevin Costner movies Dragonfly, Thirteen Days and For Love of the Game. She also did some work for animation features.

"She never really took to wrestling," Daniels said. "She helped backstage at Windy City. Every once in a while, she would walk the wrestlers to the ring or take their ring coat, but nothing past that. I never really thought of her as the valet type, and she never really wanted to get involved past just helping out."

- Daniels' favorite Marvel Comics character is Wolverine from X-Men. He trades comics with other wrestlers, mostly Samoa Joe.
- TNA's latest DVD Second 2 None features top tag team action in TNA. Hosted by the legendary 21-time tag team champions Team 3D (Dudley Boys), the two-disc DVD includes the Latin American Xchange, Beer Money Inc., Motor City Machine Guns, Lethal Consequences, Abyss and Matt Morgan, Team 3D and more. Visit tnawrestling.com.

- "I wouldn't be where I am today, if it wasn't for the fans," Daniels said. "I have fans who have been

supporting me since Windy City. I thank the people who not only support me but the ones who support the company, TNA, which I am part of."

recommend email print share buzz up! Digg


Join the discussion

The Miami Herald is pleased to provide this opportunity to share information, experiences and observations about what's in the news. Some of the comments may be reprinted elsewhere in the site or in the newspaper. We encourage lively, open debate on the issues of the day, and ask that you refrain from profanity, hate speech, personal comments and remarks that are off point. In order to post comments, you must be a registered user of MiamiHerald.com. Your username will show along with the comments you post. Thank you for taking the time to offer your thoughts.

Comments (0)

POWERED BY 

You must be logged in to leave a comment. [Login](#) | [Register](#)

Comments:  0 Showing:

More comments on this story:

Tna Wrestling Toys

Browse a huge selection now. Find exactly what you want today.
www.ebay.com

Local Movie Theaters

Find Listings for Movie Theaters -- Cinemas, Multiplex, Local only.
Movies.YellowPages

Get Pro Wrestling

Tickets
Compare ticket prices and go enjoy your favorite wrestling events.
prowrestlingticket

ADS BY YAHOO!

NEWS | SPORTS | ENTERTAINMENT | BUSINESS | LIVING | OPINION | CLASSIFIEDS | SERVICES | Site Map

 [RSS](#) |  [My Yahoo](#) | [Newsletters](#) | [Widgets](#) | [Mobile](#) | [Alerts](#) | [Twitter](#)

[About The Miami Herald](#) | [About the McClatchy Company](#) | [Terms of Use & Privacy Statement](#) | [Corrections](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Advertise](#)

Partners: [El Nuevo Herald](#) | [Newspaper in Education](#) | [WLRN](#) | [Miami Herald News](#) | [CBS4 WFOR-TV](#) | [More](#)

Copyright 2009 Miami Herald Media Co. All rights reserved