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**Marvez: Daniels feels like a new man wrestling under his old name**

Submitted by SHNS on Thu, 05/21/2009 - 14:06. [all other sports](#)  
By [ALEX MARVEZ](#), [Scripps Howard News Service](#)

Christopher Daniels is happy to be himself again.

After spending 16 months performing as two different masked characters, Daniels is back grappling under his own name in TNA Wrestling.

"There's so much involved in working under a hood that you feel like you're wearing a pair of handcuffs sometimes," Daniels said last week in a telephone interview. "I enjoyed it for a while, but being away from being me for a year and four months was too long. I'm glad to be back."

Daniels' exodus began in December 2007 when he was on the wrong end of a "Feast or Famine" match stipulation. But just like with seemingly every pro-wrestling retirement, it wasn't long before Daniels was back in the ring. He returned to TNA as Curry Man, a cartoonlike character that was the antithesis of his dark "Fallen Angel" persona as Christopher Daniels.

"I still enjoy doing Curry Man," said Daniels, who began using the gimmick while wrestling in Japan earlier this decade. "I wish (TNA) would have done a little more with it when we had the chance, but I made do. If I were still doing Curry Man, I probably wouldn't have the chance to be myself right now."

After spending all of 2008 as Curry Man, history repeated itself at last December's "Final Resolution" pay-per-view. He lost another "Feast or Famine" bout, briefly sending Daniels back to the sidelines.

Daniels was again under a mask when he resurfaced. Only this time, Daniels was replacing the injured Frankie Kazarian (torn biceps) as a newcomer named Suicide. He filled the role until Kazarian was sufficiently healed, which then left Daniels without a set TNA role.

But Daniels was in luck. TNA needed an extra grappler to join Team Jarrett (Jeff Jarrett, Samoa Joe and A.J. Styles) against the Main Event Mafia (Kurt Angle, Kevin Nash, Scott Steiner and Booker T) at last month's "Lockdown" pay-per-view show. Sans mask, Daniels was reinstated and is back as a TNA regular.

"I didn't know if that would ever happen," said Daniels, whose real name is Daniel Christopher Covell. "All of this came about suddenly. Names were being pitched around for 'Lockdown' and (TNA matchmakers) felt I was a better fit than other guys, especially because the team was made up of TNA originals."

After proving himself as one of the industry's top independent performers, Daniels joined TNA shortly after the company

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opened in 2002. But as other longtime TNA grapplers like Styles and Samoa Joe ascended into top positions, Daniels remained mired primarily in low- to mid-card story lines. Daniels admits his backstage attitude may not have helped matters.

"I went through a frustrating period of time where I was sort of raging against the machine," Daniels said. "When I took a step back and looked at things from a different perspective, I realize I didn't have a whole lot to complain about."

Given new life by TNA management, Daniels hopes he can crack the upper echelon of the promotion's talent roster.

"I feel like I'm still performing at a top level," said Daniels, 37. "Now it just depends on what (TNA) wants to do with me. I'd love to be considered at the upper level with guys like the Main Event Mafia, A.J. and Joe. But no matter what happens, I'm in this for the long haul. I'm moving toward a goal."

Daniels, though, isn't done with Suicide. He will wrestle the masked Kazarian on Sunday's "Sacrifice" pay-per-view emanating from Orlando, Fla. For more information, visit [www.tnawrestling.com](http://www.tnawrestling.com).

Flair returns: Ric Flair wasn't kidding last week when telling me he wanted to end his in-ring retirement. Flair returned to World Wrestling Entertainment on last Sunday's "Judgment Day" pay-per-view, rescuing Dave Batista from a beating being administered by Randy Orton, Cody Rhodes and Ted DiBiase Jr. The 60-year-old Flair, who worked what was supposed to be his final match in March 2008 at "Wrestlemania 24," could be doing his trademark "styling and profiling" once again as early as WWE's "Extreme Rules" pay-per-view on June 7.

(Alex Marvez writes a syndicated pro-wrestling column for Scripps-Howard News Service. Contact him at [alex1marv\(at\)aol.com](mailto:alex1marv(at)aol.com).)

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