

Wrestler of the Day – May 22: Ernest Miller

Somebody call Brodus Clay's Mama. It's Ernest Miller.

Miller was a martial artist and former football player who started wrestling in his early 30s. Since he was already behind, the idea was simple: play to his strengths. Therefore he became a martial arts character who saved fellow martial artist Glacier. They formed a team with Miller's debut match taking place on Nitro, June 23, 1997.

Glacier/Ernest Miller vs. High Voltage

This is Miller's debut. Rage and Kaos jump the karate guys from behind and are immediately kicked to the floor. Glacier and Kaos start things off but Rage comes in with a springboard bulldog. High Voltage hits a double gorilla press but Glacier comes back with strikes. Mortis, Wrath and Vandenberg are watching from the stage. Miller comes in and kicks a lot before hitting something like Trouble in Paradise from the top rope for the pin. Standard debut match.

Their first and definitely most prominent feud was against Mortis and Wrath, with their big showdown taking place at Bash at the Beach 1997.

Mortis/Wrath vs. Ernest Miller/Glacier

These four seemingly had more matches on PPV than I can count. Glacier is all ticked off to start and spears down Mortis so he can pound on him. He looks at Wrath and freezes him somehow so that Miller can hit a springboard dropkick to take the big man down. Off to Miller vs. Wrath now as we're told Miller played for the Falcons and Patriots. I can't find any evidence of this anywhere else and I've never heard of it otherwise. Why does that not shock me?

Miller fires off some kicks but gets caught in a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker but a middle rope elbow misses. Glacier comes in and hits a double dropkick with Miller to Wrath for two. Glacier goes to the floor where Mortis beats him up a bit. Wrath hits a pretty nice running somersault off the apron to take out the ice enthusiast. He finds a chair to put against Glacier's head so Mortis can kick the chair into Glacier's head into the post.

Back inside now for Glacier vs. Mortis. Heenan says there's something between these two in the past but Glacier doesn't want to go into what it is. Wrath comes back in and they hit Beer Money's DWI for two. ROH fans will like this as Wrath throws on a Billy Goat's Curse and Mortis drops a leg at the same time.

Mortis misses a moonsault and Miller comes in illegally to help Glacier. Feliner (Trouble in Paradise) takes out both heels. Everything breaks down and Glacier gets a DDT to put Mortis down for a delayed too. James Vandenberg, the manager of Mortis/Wrath puts a chain on Mortis' foot so a kick to the chest ends this for Glacier's first loss.

Rating: B-. Better match than you would expect here and I liked it for the most part. Mortis is more commonly known as Kanyon and he can do some interesting stuff. Wrath was shockingly good here too and is a guy I've always liked a little so that's a nice perk. Also, notice how much better it is with guys to compliment the martial arts guys. You get a much better match.

Miller and Mortis had a singles match on Nitro, October 6, 1997.

Ernest Miller vs. Mortis

Now here's a fresh match. Miller takes over with a quick snapmare and a kick to the face for two. Ernest expands his moveset even further by going up top, only to get crotched by

James Vanderberg. A top rope Fameasser gets two for the guy in a mask (Mortis) and he even uses the rope for good measure. It's time for kicks because what would these two be without a lot of kicks?

Mortis keeps being EVIL by throwing Miller over the top rope while the referee is distracted. How EVIL can he get? Apparently Jackie is getting a TV Title shot at Halloween Havoc. A kind of Russian legsweep gets two for the EVIL one before he breaks up a sunset flip with a right hand. Miller rolls away from a top rope splash though and hits two kicks (I'm as shocked as you are), one being from the top, for the pin.

Rating: D. It would take Miller basically going crazy before he got interesting which makes these earlier matches pretty hard to sit through. The guy just wasn't interesting as you can only take "karate guy" so far as a gimmick. Mortis continues to impress with that wide variety of offense he has. Oh and he's EVIL so that helps.

When this character stopped working for the most part because he wasn't all that interesting, the solution became to have Miller fight other karate guys, like Jerry Flynn, who he fought on June 1, 1998's Nitro.

Jerry Flynn vs. Ernest Miller

Miller starts with a backdrop but can't hit a few spin kicks to the face. Off to an armbar on Jerry but Flynn comes back with some kicks in the corner. Now it's Flynn with an armbar followed by some kicks to the arm but Miller comes back with a fireman's carry powerslam. The latest version of the Feliner (in this case Kofi Kingston's Trouble in Paradise) misses by about eight inches but it's enough to pin Jerry.

Rating: D-. This is the same problem you always have with the guys in these matches: just because they can throw kicks doesn't make them interesting. Jerry Flynn is an uninteresting

of a wrestler as you'll ever see and Miller was only starting to become competent in the ring at this point.

Miller finally started to figure it out when he became a cocky heel who bought his own hype as a three time World Karate Champion. Here's an example of that on Nitro from January 11, 1999 as part of his long and not that interesting feud with Perry Saturn.

The Cat vs. Perry Saturn

Scott Dickinson is referee because this story won't die. Miller tries a sneak attack to start but gets suplexed down and hammered on in the corner. A ticked off Saturn pounds away with right hands but Dickinson physically pulls him off. The announcers try to tell us a history between Saturn and Dickinson but they lose me as soon as I remember it's about a mostly bald referee.

Miller kicks him in the leg and poses a lot before we hit the chinlock. A dropkick to the knee puts Perry down again (Tony calls it a knee to the ribs because he's stupid in 1999) but Saturn comes back with a quick suplex. He hits a frog splash but Dickinson is with Sonny Onoo, allowing Jericho to come in and hit Saturn with a shovel. It knocks Saturn into Dickinson though and that's a DQ.

Rating: D. Did Saturn run over Bischoff's dog or something? He's plummeted through the floor since the biggest push of his career and it seems like it's just going further and further. I don't know why I'm surprised, but I don't see why the Dickinson stuff is needed at all. This same story could be told with just Jericho.

Miller next had a feud with Scott Norton for no apparent reason and lost most of the early matches. They had a showdown scheduled for Great American Bash 1999.

Ernest Miller vs. Scott Norton

This isn't even good enough for Nitro. Apparently it is as this is the fourth or fifth match in a feud. Norton won a bunch to start and then Miller hit him with a crowbar to get the win. And never mind as for some reason, Horace Freaking Hogan comes out and says that since Cat (Miller) hit him on Monday also, Horace, who is in the NWO, gets the shot.

Ernest Miller vs. Horace Hogan

Yes, this match is actually happening. Horace is Hogan's nephew and a decent looking power guy. He takes over to start but Miller gets in a kick to the face to take over. Now he stands around. Horace gets sent to the floor and Sonny Onoo kicks him a few times. The crowd is DEAD. Horace takes him down with a big boot and a splash gets two. Miller gets dumped to the floor where Onoo loads up the red shoe out of a briefcase. A superkick with it ends this.

Rating: F. Horace Hogan was on a PPV. I don't think I need to explain why this is a failure.

Soon after this, Miller would FINALLY get what he was looking for and become an over the top James Brown style character known as The Cat. He also turned face and rose up the card, including being in the tournament for the vacant US Title at Spring Stampede 2000.

US Title Tournament Quarter-Finals: Mike Awesome vs. Ernest Miller

This is six days after Awesome, still ECW Champion at the time, ran in on Nitro after jumping ship. Bigelow jumps Awesome and has taken Miller's spot it seems. Well sure why not. Big dive to the floor takes Bigelow out and then dumps him into the crowd. Awesome busts out an Ahmed Johnson style dive over the railing as the brawl keeps going. Top rope clothesline back inside gets two. Bigelow wakes up and slams Awesome down and adds the headbutt for no cover. Here's Miller who kicks Bigelow in the head and dances a bit. Awesome kills

him with a powerbomb and frog splash to advance.

Rating: D. The brawling was decent and Awesome was incredible as usual but the whole Bigelow/Miller thing was totally pointless. Also it makes no sense as either guy not named Awesome should have been disqualified for interference but whatever. This was nothing interesting but was there to have Awesome get pushed harder, which is fine.

Miller would get some more high profile matches later on, including this one from New Blood Rising.

Great Muta vs. Ernest Miller

Yeah because this is worth paying to see. Muta of course has generic Asian music. The Filthy Animals guarantee Cat will win this which means interference of course. We've had interference in the first match already so why not go two for two? Muta works on the arm while Tony talks about how this isn't about wrestling but about winning. I wonder how much of that line was real and how much was scripted.

Muta was one of those guys that came back every now and then and we were supposed to be impressed for no apparent reason. He never had a storyline of note other than he's Great Muta so you should like him. And here comes Tygress for no apparent reason. Cat does nothing but kick and is dominating Muta. The far more talented guy gets an ankle hold and takes over.

The Moonsault misses though and Cat takes the mist. Tygress gets a chair shot to Muta for two. Fans are dead for this mind you. Cat kicks Muta a lot and then a spin kick ends it. This was totally pointless.

Rating: D. Tygress looked good. That's about all this has going for it otherwise. Cat was a guy that they wanted to make into something but I have no idea why. Muta was a special attraction so they have him go down like this. It makes perfect sense right? This was just a way to kill time and it

was just bad.

We'll head to Germany for a PPV called Millennium Final with Miller facing Mike Sanders, who he feuded with for a long stretch of the end of 2000.

Ernest Miller vs. Mike Sanders

This is for the Commissionership, which of course makes sense in a major company: have two men fight to see who the boss is. This was another of the mindlessly dumb feuds they had over who got to be boss like 18 or whatever. I think Sanders is commissioner coming in here. And it's a two minute match with the Cat winning with a spinkick. I hated these things back then and I hate them now.

Rating: N/A. It's stupid so it must be WCW. Miller was a guy that I never got the appeal of so he kept getting pushed further and further up the card. I was surprised he never won the world title because it would have failed that much better.

Next up was a feud with Shane Douglas which was somehow related to their respective women (Miller's Miss Jones and Shane's Torrie Wilson). From Mayhem 2000.

Shane Douglas vs. Ernest Miller

Shane says he's not afraid of Miller. Miller says he's going to twist Shane apart. Ms. Jones and Torrie are here at least so we have them to look at. They hit the floor almost immediately and are on the table. Madden got kicked in the throat apparently and Stevie is losing it over that. Now he cheers against Miller the whole time and is very annoying. Well at least Torrie's back is to the ring and she has a nice figure. Franchise keeps using the neck crank which looks awful even for a neck crank.

A sunset flip is blocked by Miller who just has to throw in a crotch chop for the fun of it I guess. The crowd is DEAD here.

Miller gets the Feliner out of nowhere and takes forever to cover, resulting in two. The girls go at it a bit which allows Shane to get a chain out of his tights which gets two. The referee shoves Shane into a rollup for two. And then Ms. Jones slips Cat a shoe from a briefcase to hit Shane with it for the win. You know, instead of the briefcase.

Rating: D. Shane in WCW sucked. Miller sucked period. The only good stuff in this match was the hotness of the women. Outside of that there was absolutely nothing special here, yet this match managed to get eight minutes of PPV time. Did I mention this show had 12 matches? This match gets eight minutes of time...why? Did ANYONE want to see these two fight? Let the girls fight if nothing else. Horrible match.

With WCW going out of business soon after this, Miller went to the WWA and was on their Revolution PPV.

West Hollywood Blondes vs. Rick Steiner/Ernest Miller

Miller says if they lose to the girly men, he'll kiss Madden in a fat area. Since they wasted so much time with Bret talking about hockey, Larry wasting our time, and SABU GETTING TWENTY FIVE MINUTES TOTAL, this lasts a minute with Miller kicking Lenny in the head for the pin.

Miller would eventually be brought into WWE for a handful of matches. Here's one of them from Smackdown on February 5, 2004.

Tajiri vs. Ernest Miller

Miller has his awesome afroed ring announcer Lamont to bring him out. This is due to Tajiri attacking Lamont last week after Miller was eliminated from a battle royal. Tajiri has Akido and Sakoda with him here. Miller hits his dancing chops to take over but gets kicked to the ropes as Tajiri seems to be loading up the mist. A big chop from Tajiri gets two and he elbows Miller in the head for good measure. The Tarantula has

Miller in even more trouble but he counters a big kick with a rollup for the pin out of nowhere.

So....yeah Miller kind of sucked. He just wasn't all that great in the ring and relied WAY too much on the kicking. However, he could talk people into caring about him and that's more important than being able to work a few different kinds of suplexes. No he wasn't going to last long term, but he did a lot of good things in a goofy time for WCW. He's also a good illustration of the difference between a gimmick (karate guy) and a character (over the top James Brown style guy). The former isn't going to last more than a few months while the second can make someone more interesting than they have any right to be.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of on the History of Survivor Series at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at: