

Wrestler of the Day – May 23: Bray Wyatt

He's got the whole world in his hat. Today is Bray Wyatt.

Bray is the son of wrestler Mike Rotundo (IRS) and got his start in 2009. We'll pick things up on June 14 of that year on FCW television. Bray is going by Duke Rotunda and is a blond here.

Jon Cutler/Lance Hoyt vs. Vic Adams/Duke Rotundo

This is Adams/Rotundo's TV debut. Duke runs over Cutler with ease before cranking on a headlock. Off to Hoyt vs. Adams with Vic cranking on the arm to take over. Hoyt drives him into the corner so Cutler can get in a cheap shot from the apron, setting up Lance's wicked release high collar suplex.

Back to Cutler for a one armed camel clutch and a chinlock before Lance comes in again to hammer away. Adams finally avoids a charging Cutler and dives into the corner for the hot tag to Duke. The running backsplash gets two on Cutler as Hoyt breaks up the pin. Everything breaks down and Adams hits what looked to be a Rock Bottom for the pin on Cutler.

Rating: D+. The match was nothing of note but it worked well enough. Adams had a decent look and some nice power but Cutler was as generic as you can get. Duke had the best look of the four and even then it wasn't anything all that great. That being said, this is what FCW is about: getting people ring time.

Duke would hook up with his brother and win the FCW Tag Team Titles soon after this and defend them on September 6, 2009's FCW TV.

FCW Tag Team Titles: Bo Rotundo/Duke Rotundo vs. Vance

Archer/Dylan Klein

Archer is Hoyt under his more famous name and this is the first title defense. Bo cranks on Klein's head to start before driving some shoulders into the ribs. Archer pulls him off the apron to send Bo face first into the apron before dropping a leg back inside. The challengers take over with Klein getting two off a snap suplex. Bo slips into the corner for the hot tag to Duke, who does the splits to avoid a cross body. Everything breaks down and Duke hits a swinging Rock Bottom for the pin on Archer.

Rating: C-. Not a great match again but the Rotundos looked better than Duke and a random partner. This was also much more about showcasing Duke than anyone else as he got the hot tag and then cleaned house for the win. It seems to be the right call a few years later too as he's the biggest star of the four.

Rotundo would be one of the rookies on the second season of NXT. One of his first matches was on June 29, 2010.

MVP vs. Husky Harris

Harris is 0-1. They go really slowly to start. Harris apparently is mad at Rhodes for embarrassing him on Friday. Crowd isn't that thrilled here. Mark Henry is on assignment apparently. Dang Harris is a dull guy to watch. This is just a slow and boring match with NOTHING of interest going on in it. Harris misses his back splash as the crowd is DEAD. When Ballin is barely able to get a pop you can tell the match sucks. MVP hits a Downward Spiral and Harris is 0-2. Dang I hate that move too. Harris won't shake MVP's hand post match.

Rating: F. This was just boring. No one thought Harris had a chance and no one cared at all. This did nothing at all and deserves to fail. Even the overrated Ryder could have gotten a better match out of him here. MVP isn't the guy you want carrying a match and here is your proof.

Here's a slightly better match from July 27, 2010.

Kaval vs. Husky Harris

This should go short as it's getting close to 10:45 and we have a poll to do. Kaval was at a Lady Gaga concert apparently with Laycool. We talk about the Cowboys for a bit regarding the Dez Bryan/Roy Williams incident which was overblown. Kaval uses stuff other than kicks here which is a nice perk for him. Laycool gets knocked to the floor and Kaval checks on them. A reverse suplex and the back splash end it with Harris getting the win.

Rating: C-. Kaval uses stuff other than just kicks here which is a big step up for him. That's his main issue: he needs to vary up his offense which is what he did. Harris is still not someone I can get into but I can tolerate him more now than I could before. This was fine for what it was and Kaval showing concern for his pros was cool.

Harris would join the Nexus in the fall and have a pretty high profile match on October 18, 2010's Raw.

John Cena/Randy Orton vs. Husky Harris/Michael McGillicutty

Nexus comes out to stand on stage. Michael and Cena start us off as Cena hits a release fisherman's suplex where McGillicutty lands on his back. Back and it's Orton hitting his perfect dropkick on the perfect son. Not much going on here as you're just kind of waiting on the big thing to happen. McGillicutty hits his neck snap off the middle rope which was kind of nice. Hot tag to Orton who comes in to beat the heck out of everyone. He points at Barrett and sets for the RKO. BIG FU to Harris and the RKO ends McGillicutty. Cena has a big old celebration and is clearly rather happy.

Rating: C. Average stuff here and the ending was appropriate. There was no way the Super Friends were losing here and they shouldn't have. This was of course to set up the post match

angle which is fine. Using a match to set up an angle is fine and it worked rather well here I though. Average match and nothing special but nothing bad either.

We'll jump ahead a bit to Harris being back in FCW and look at one of the big matches in his long feud with Percy Watson.

Husky Harris vs. Percy Watson

Lumberjack match. Harris slugs him down to start but Percy knocks him out to the floor. Back in and Harris gets caught in a headlock but he drives Watson throat first into the top rope. Back up and we hit a chinlock on Watson followed by a chinlock. Watson fights up and hits some dropkicks but his enziguri gets caught in a half crab. That goes nowhere so Percy fights up and hits a floatover DDT for two. A reverse DDT puts Harris down again but Michael McGillicutty puts his foot on the ropes. Watson is sent outside again and the distraction allows Harris to hit the release Rock Bottom for the pin.

Rating: D. This was really dull stuff due to the lack of any real anger. If we're going to have a lumberjack match, it needs to be over two people that can't stand the sight of each other. Watson was energetic, but at the same time I find it hard to get interested in someone named Percy. It's just not that interesting of a name.

Here's a match that would be WAY different today. This took place at Wrestlemania XXVIII Axxess.

Bo Rotundo/Husky Harris vs. Damien Sandow/Antonio Cesaro

Rotundo is of course Dallas and Harris' real life brother. Sandow has Summer Rae with him. Damien is called a Diva due to his manly pink trunks and gets to start with Harris. They fight into the corner with Sandow hiding several times in a row. A big right hand puts Sandow down and he hides with Summer in the corner again.

Cesaro comes in and wants Bo but first demands SILENCE. The brothers double team Cesaro for a bit until a Sandow distraction lets Antonio knee Bo to the floor. Sandow comes in and hammers away for a bit before it's back to Cesaro for more stomping. Bo breaks out of a front facelock from Sandow and makes the tag to Harris. House is cleaned and some misdirection lets Bo spear Sandow for the pin.

Rating: D+. Nothing much to see here but to be fair it wasn't supposed to be anything of note other than to give the live fans something to see. It's so strange to see Harris as a face knowing what he'll become in just a year or so. Bo using a spear just didn't work at all given how small he is.

We'll jump ahead a bit now as Harris was repackaged as Bray Wyatt, a swamp preacher and borderline cult leader. We'll pick him up on February 20, 2013 on NXT after Bray returned from an injury.

Yoshi Tatsu vs. Bray Wyatt

This is a good idea as the Wyatt Family lost last week, so having Wyatt himself get in the ring, I believe for the second time on NXT, is a way to redeem the Family. Wyatt no sells everything and throws Tatsu down with a wicked release Rock Bottom. A BIG running splash crushes Tatsu in the corner and a fast spinning Downward Spiral gets the pin at 1:37. Total squash.

Bray and his Family (cult followers) would debut in WWE in early June and set their sights on Kane. Wyatt's debut match in WWE was a Ring of Fire match against Kane at Summerslam 2013.

Kane vs. Bray Wyatt

Wyatt and his Family debuted a few weeks ago and attacked Kane. Tonight the ring is surrounded by fire to prevent interference but you win by pin/submission. This is Bray's in

ring debut. Kane pounds him into the corner to start and clotheslines him down, sending the flames shooting into the air. The Family tries to get closer to the ring and there goes the fire again. Nice touch. Bray charges right at Kane and pounds away but can't hit a suplex.

Kane suplexes him down instead, sending the fire up again. Bray avoids the low dropkick but misses a charge, sending himself into the ropes and near the flames. Wyatt crushes him in the corner with a splash and mostly misses a cross body. They're lucky that the flames are covering up a lot of these misses. Bray slugs his way out of a chokeslam but Kane "hits" a big boot. Are the flames really messing them up that badly? That's like three moves that have mostly missed. Kane side slams him down for no cover but Bray gets in a shot to take Kane down.

Wyatt asks for a weapon but as Harper loads up a kendo stick the flames go up, catching the stick on fire. Firemen put it out so Rowan steals the extinguisher, but it has no effect. There's the chokeslam to Wyatt but Kane hits a second one for revenge. He calls for the tombstone but the Family puts a blanket over the flames, allowing the monsters to come in and beat Kane down. There's no DQ though so this is all legal. Kane is destroyed and Sister Abigail is good for the pin at 7:49.

Rating: D+. This was disappointing. The visuals were cool but just putting a blanket over the flames was a pretty lame way to have the monsters get inside. I was expecting something a bit more supernatural instead of fire safety tips with the Wyatt Family. Also what was up with those botches?

Next up for Bray was the white hot Daniel Bryan, who had joined the Wyatts for about two weeks before rebelling against them, setting up this showdown at the 2014 Royal Rumble.

Daniel Bryan vs. Bray Wyatt

The Family is with Bray here, despite the idea of the match being that they're not supposed to be here. Daniel fires off kicks to the leg and takes Bray down with a running knee but Bray gets in a shot of his own to take over. The Wyatts get in a few blows of their own and are ejected, with Bray saying he doesn't need them to fight this war. Back in and Daniel gets in some kicks to the leg and a high cross body for two, only to be sent to the floor. Bray misses a charge into the steps and injures his knee again, giving Bryan the opening he's been needing.

Daniel hooks something resembling an Indian Deathlock before stomping Bray's face into the mat for two. They slug it out on the apron with the fans chanting YES/NO in time. Bray headbutts Daniel to stagger him and wrings his arm down onto the apron to take over. Back in and Bray is in serious mode now. We hit the chinlock but Daniel quickly fights up with forearms, only to be backdropped to the floor.

The annoying fans chant Jerry Lawler as Bray rams Daniel's head into the post and drives in forearms for good measure. A running senton backsplash has Daniel in even more trouble and Bray asks the fans why they don't help him. Bray catapults Daniel throat first into the ropes and we hit another chinlock. Wyatt does his spider walk out of the corner and the announcers of course laugh at Linda Blair jokes. He stays on Daniel's neck with another chinlock but Daniel gets in a shot to the head and shakes the ropes before firing off even more strikes.

A drop toehold sends Bray into the middle buckle and there are the YES Kicks to the chest and leg. Daniel hooks a hurricanrana from the middle rope to send the big man flying but he's out at two. Now the fans are into it by saying this is awesome and there's the moonsault in the corner. Daniel loads up the clothesline but thankfully Bray knows what's coming and hits a running elbow to stop Bryan's comeback.

Bray misses a charge and falls to the floor, allowing Bryan to hit a running tornado DDT off the apron. Awesome looking move. There's the running dropkick to knock Bray into the barricade and the missile dropkick puts him down back inside. Now the real YES Kicks have Bray in even more trouble as the fans are going nuts. The big kick to the head gets two and Daniel loads up the running dropkicks in the corner but Bray clotheslines him inside out for a very near fall.

Sister Abigail is countered into a rollup for two and there's the YES Lock but Bray bites the hand for the break. Bray's superplex is countered with headbutts and Daniel hits a top rope splash to crush Wyatt. Daniel loads up the running knee but Bray bails to the floor. Bryan dives at him with the FLYING GOAT but Bray catches him in midair and hits a wicked Sister Abigail into the barricade. Sister Abigail connects for the pin at 21:37.

Rating: A. Well that was awesome. This was a good example of a match where both guys could look great and only one could win. Daniel losing here isn't a bad thing as he could still come back later and win the Rumble to make up for this. Both guys look better coming out of this and Bray was the one that needed the win more. As soon as he loses, a lot of his mystique is gone. Outstanding match here and something Bray needed.

With the Wyatt Family totally dominant, there was only one team that could take them on: Shield. This was the biggest match of the night at Elimination Chamber 2014.

Wyatt Family vs. Shield

The Wyatts take their sweet time as is their custom and we get a long staredown as the fans think this is awesome before busting out the dueling chants. This is what you get when you actually build up a feud to the point where you can't imagine either team going down clean. Ambrose jumps the Family and the

Shield clears out the ring before the opening bell.

Rowan vs. Rollins gets things going with Erick being drokicked into the Shield corner before it's off to Reigns for a pop. He's out just as quickly as it's back to Rollins who gets his head taken off with a clothesline. Harper comes in for some hard right hands before it's off to the boss for some knees in the corner. Rollins is thrown into the corner and the tag brings in Reigns. You can feel the fans get excited for this showdown.

They trade right hands with Bray getting the worst of it so a tag brings in Harper. Luke can't suplex Reigns so Roman counters into one of his own and brings in Dean. Ambrose pounds away in the corner before it's back to Reigns for two off a HARD right hand. Dean gets two off the dropkick against the ropes and it's back to Seth for a headbutt to Luke's back. The Shield starts their fast tagging with Dean coming in to rake his forearm over Luke's face. A middle rope elbow to the jaw puts Luke down but Rowan offers a distraction, allowing Harper to hit a dropkick of all things.

Bray gets the tag to pound away on Dean as the Family takes over again. A running splash in the corner crushes Dean and it's back to Rowan for the head vice with two fists. Rowan gets two off a side slam and brings Harper back in, only to have Dean grab a swinging neckbreaker to get a breather.

Rollins comes back in with a nice running dropkick but he gets caught on the top rope. Luke loads up a reverse superplex but Seth lands on his feet and sends Harper to the floor for a suicide dive. Back inside and the top rope knee to the side of the head puts Harper down again and Seth has a fired up look in his eyes. Harper kicks his head off for a very close two and it's back to Bray after the best sequence Rollins has ever had in WWE.

Bray sends Rollins outside and hits the running backplash on

the floor before it's back to Rowan. The dueling chants begin again before the fans say they want tables. Back to Harper who hammers away in the corner and scores with a running clothesline. Wyatt demands to be tagged in but runs into a boot in the corner. Rollins goes to the middle rope, only to dive into a chokeslam of all things for two. Ambrose tries to make the save but Harper kicks his head off, sending him to the floor.

Rollins finally gets in a shot to Harper's head and the hot tag brings in Reigns to clean house. A Samoan drop puts Rowan down but Harper saves his partner. There's the dropkick from the floor for two on Erick as everything breaks down. Dean takes Bray down and hammers away before dropkicking him out to the floor. Harper dives through the floor to take out Ambrose but Rollins hits a swanton dive over the top to take Luke out. Reigns rolls up Erick for a VERY close two but they clothesline each other down.

Seth loads up the Spanish announce table but Bray decks him from behind. Ambrose saves Rollins from being sent through the table and takes Bray into the crowd with another charge. AWESOME stuff here. Rowan and Reigns slug it out and Roman goes shoulder first into the post, only to come back with a running clothesline for two. Rollins hits Harper with a monitor to the ribs but Bray comes back and loads up the other announce table. Rowan takes Reigns down in the ring and sends him to the floor with a fallaway slam.

The Family has Rollins surrounded and the monsters double chokeslam him through the announce table. Ambrose is still gone so it's pretty much Reigns vs. all three Family members. They slowly get back in the ring and Roman sees what he's up against. He goes right for Bray but the numbers are too much for him.

Harper kicks Reigns' head off and drops to his knees for the tag off to Wyatt. Bray does his upside down thing in the

corner but Reigns powers out of Sister Abigail and Bray is terrified. Reigns goes into Beast Mode and Samoan drops Bray before hitting Rowan and Bray with Superman Punches. The spear puts Harper down but Wyatt runs Reigns over, setting up Sister Abigail for the pin at 22:45.

Rating: A+. When you expect a match to be one of the best match you've seen in a long time and get blown away, you've seen something special. This was outstanding stuff and had me glued to the screen which doesn't happen every day. Outstanding match where neither team looked bad at all. Find this match if you didn't catch it tonight.

Bray would set his sights on John Cena, attacking him later in the night. The showdown was at Wrestlemania XXX and the battle was over Cena's legacy as a hero.

John Cena vs. Bray Wyatt

Bray is played to the ring in an awesome visual, complete with barrels fire, what appears to be a voodoo woman dancing with swords and I believe an altar. No special entrance for Cena this year but he gets more booing than cheers. The cheers are there though. Bray bounces on the middle rope to start before kneeling in front of Cena and begging John to be a monster and hit him. FINISH ME JOHN! Cena says get up and fight before taking Bray down with a headlock. Bray headbutts Cena several times to take over while shouting a lot.

An elbow drop gets two and he asks the fans if this is their hero. Cena comes back with a HARD clothesline before looking furious in the corner. He hammers away on Bray but Wyatt laughs and invites Cena to do more. John drives in more right hands, drawing Harper and Rowan to the apron. Wyatt keeps laughing (very 1998 Raven) and Cena isn't sure what to do. He chokes away which is exactly what Bray wants as Cena is unleashing the monster inside. A big boot drops Bray but Cena is angry at himself for losing control.

Bray lifts Cena up for a suplex but slams him down instead in a cool visual. John comes back with a dropkick but gets caught in a sleeper. It shifts into a chinlock but Cena counters with the ProtoBomb. He loads up the Shuffle but Bray bridges up into the spider stance. Fans: "THAT WAS CREEPY!" Bray runs him over and conducts the crowd as the arm swaying begins. Cena comes back with a tornado DDT but the Fameasser is countered into a wicked powerbomb for a very close two.

Cena comes back again and hits the Shuffle but Bray counters the AA into a spinning gutbuster for two. Bray takes him to the apron for a DDT and another near fall as the fans starting singing He's Got The Whole World In His Hands. Now THAT is a creepy moment. John is able to fight out of a superplex and loads up the Fameasser, only to dive onto the Family instead. Bray is right back on him though and sends Cena hard into the steps. Wyatt says he's figured it out but gets knocked down by a hard shot.

Now we get to the interesting part as Cena picks up the steps but can't bring himself to embrace the hate. Back in and the hard cross body gets two for Bray and it's time for more singing. He misses a backsplash though and Cena nails the AA for two. This kicking out of finishers thing is really getting old. Rowan tries to interfere, allowing Harper to superkick Cena down. Now the backsplash gets two and Bray is getting frustrated.

He sends Cena outside so John spears Luke through the barricade for some revenge. That's what Bray wanted though so he throws Cena back inside and bends over backwards in the corner. Sister Abigail is countered into the STF but Bray makes the ropes. Back up and a quick Sister Abigail is good for two. Wyatt is smiling again and heads outside to load up the announce table.

Then he goes over to get a chair (giving us a visual of Harper still out cold two and a half minutes after he was laid out)

but slides it to Cena instead. Bray gets on his knees and tells Cena to hit him. This is the big moment as John heavily thinks about it but is able to control himself and knock Rowan off the apron with the chair instead. Sister Abigail is countered into an AA for the pin out of nowhere at 22:28.

Rating: B. The match was the usual big match style here with both guys hitting all their big stuff. However the important part here was the psychological war instead of the physical aspect. I'm REALLY not sure on Cena winning, but the story is clearly going to continue in some gimmick matches. That's where Cena can be pushed even further and go too far with the violence ala Magnum vs. Tully where Magnum went nuts and then realized what he did.

The match worked well enough but the ending leaves a lot of questions to be answered. The biggest of all though is what happens to Wyatt. Hopefully the magic isn't gone after the loss but we'll find that out very soon. He'll be way over in his home state and the gimmick is cool enough to keep him over for years.

After Cena got the better of him at Wrestlemania, they met again in a cage match at Extreme Rules 2014.

John Cena vs. Bray Wyatt

The fans sing John Cena Sucks to the tune of his music. Bray gives Rowan and Harper some instructions before the match gets going. He shouts that this is what Cena wanted but gets caught in a headlock. Cena jumps over Bray coming off the ropes but Wyatt just blasts him in the back with a forearm. A release fisherman's suplex puts Bray down but Harper stops Cena from climbing the cage, allowing Bray to take his head off with a right hand.

Cena goes face first into the cage and Bray demands that he apologize to all these people for making them watch this. Rowan rams into Cena against the cage and Bray runs him over

for two. John comes back with a catapult into the cage but Bray pulls him back in over the top. They slug it out on the top with Cena winning but Bray crotches him down on the top rope to take over again. We get the old dancing with the limp body spot before a release Rock Bottom gets two for Bray.

Cena comes back with a slam and tries to climb out but Bray does the spider walk towards the door. The running body attack gets two for Wyatt and a few rams into the cage have Cena in more trouble. A reversal finally sends Bray into the steel, allowing Cena to initiate his finishing sequence. Bray escapes the AA and tries to climb but Cena pulls him off the ropes with a Batista Bomb for two.

John calls for the door to be opened but Rowan closes it right back. It turns into a test of strength with Cena winning until Harper comes over to help. Cena shoves BOTH of them away from the door but Bray is back up with a jawbreaker for the save. Another ram into the cage puts Bray down again but Rowan shoves Cena back over the top of the cage.

Wyatt is back up as well but gets bulldogged off the top for two. Now it's Harper climbing the cage for a fight with Cena, so John pulls him down into the cage. Cena kicks the door onto Bray's head but Rowan is waiting with a chair. John climbs back in and gets caught in the suplex slam followed by the senton backsplash for two. Sister Abigail is countered into the STF but Bray crawls to the door.

Cena lets go because of the ropes being in his face which is better than a rope break at least. Harper is sent into the cage but Bray sends Cena in as well. He climbs up but gets pulled back down for an AA off the top, only to have Harper make a save. A clothesline puts Harper down but Cena is favoring his arm.

Rowan makes ANOTHER save so Cena grabs him by the beard and rams him into the cage. The top rope Fameasser puts Harper

down but as Cena goes for the door we get the Wyatt satellite hijacking. The lights go out and come back to show a child singing in a demonic voice in Cena's face. Sister Abigail puts Cena down and Bray walks out for the win at 21:12 in front of the terrifying child.

Rating: B+. This was too overbooked for my taste. The Wyatts interfering about 857 times was too much but the child coming in for the save was a nice touch and tied into the storyline well. That being said, Bray needs to get a win on his own over Cena soon. It's not like it's going to hurt Cena or anything.

Bray Wyatt is a great example of someone who had talent and WWE kept searching until they found the right formula for him. That's something that is so necessary but you hardly ever see it. So often you'll see one gimmick not work and then WWE throws up their hands and gives up (see Chris Masters for one of many examples). Thankfully with Bray they took their time and allowed him to find the character that blew the doors off the place. The guy is 27 as of this writing and is going to be a big deal for awhile.

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