

Wrestler of the Day – September 11: Gunner

Today is a man that is as intense as he claims to be: Gunner.

Gunner got his start in the early 2000s as Phil Shatter. Here's a match from just before he started for TNA on February 27, 2009.

Big Daddy Z vs. Phil Shatter

Z is a very large man that takes Shatter into the corner for some shoulders to the ribs. The fat man poses and chokes on the ropes a bit as he looks like he can barely breathe. A pair of big running clotheslines drop Phil for two. Shatter comes back with some right hands but gets dropped by a splash in the corner. Z misses a "charge" and gets dropped by a series of clotheslines for two. Some guys try to come in to attack Shatter and the match is thrown out after he fights them off for a bit.

Rating: D-. I feel sorry for Shatter here as he needs something a lot better to work with than this big fat tub of goo. The guy was reaching Big Sal E. Graziano levels of fat and there's no real way to work with something like that. The match was your typical big man vs. normal guy match when the big man can't do jack.

Gunner would head to TNA soon after this as part of Immortal's security force. Here he is in a singles effort on Impact, March 17, 2011.

TV Title: Rob Terry vs. Gunner vs. Murphy

Gunner has the tattoos. Got it. The tag team jumps Terry but then splits up soon. Hogan's wife and Brooke (looks JUST like Linda) are here. We split the screen for a bit to show that the cops are here for Angle. People keep trying to steal wins which gets them nowhere. Murphy and Terry slug it out with Terry winning. Gunner pops up to spear him and then hits a modified F5 to win the title at 1:47. The match didn't even make it to two minutes. Wow indeed. Bischoff comes out to applaud.

Here's a six man on August 25, 2011 as part of Immortal's war with

Fortune.

AJ Styles/Beer Money vs. Immortal

Ray/Gunner/Steiner here. This is Hardcore remember. Big brawl to start and Storm spits beer at someone, just like Steiner does at Roode. No one has been in the ring yet but they don't have to be here. I think whoever gets the fall here gets the points. Gunner vs. AJ in the ring now and Abyss is watching from the ramp. Dang AJ has a great dropkick. It only gets one and here's Steiner with a belly to belly.

Roode comes in and gets the Blockbuster for two. Ray kicks his head off for two and there have been no tags at all so far. Now it's Storm with a kick to the head and a cross body for two on Ray. The former champs hit a double suplex on Ray and SHOUT THOSE NAMES. Roode looks jacked here. AJ wakes up and hits a HUGE dive to the floor to take out Ray. He's holding his knee though.

Gunner sends Storm into the set for two and Steiner misses a chair shot. Abyss is still looking down at them. We go split screen which for once is a good idea. The fans boo because as usual, THEY CAN'T SEE ANYTHING. Beer Money is getting beaten down and Storm has a locker dropped on his knees. Gunner, ever the smart dude, walks away as AJ hits the springboard clothesline for two on Ray back in the ring. Gunner comes back and AJ is distracted, letting Ray hit the Bubba Bomb for the pin on AJ at 6:00.

Rating: C. Meh just another six man hardcore match. It's not bad or anything but it wasn't great. Right in the middle works pretty well I think. It's good to see someone move up in the ranks in the form of Ray but I'd like to see someone with an actual chance of going to BFG get the points instead. At the moment it's looking like Beer Money, Ray and Crimson. For some reason, that doesn't blow my skirt up.

Gunner would compete in the 2011 Bound For Glory Series and do quite well. Here's his chance to make the final four on Impact, September 1, 2011.

Bound For Glory Series: Gunner vs. Rob Van Dam

For all intents and purposes, the winner is the fourth man. Everyone else is mathematically eliminated and I'm not going to bother listing off the points tonight. It almost has to be Rob going but that would make too much sense so I'm not sure. Joe comes out almost immediately and Morgan jumps up to stop him. Joe kicks him in the balls but security sends him out.

After that we're back to the match at hand and there's not much going on. Gunner gets a slingshot suplex but Rob almost rolls out of it. Rob fires off some kicks and hits the Rolling Thunder. Here's Jerry Lynn but Rob sends him to the back which is probably smart. Rob actually shows some intelligence and doesn't try to go for the Five Star after being on the floor for a bit.

They trade rollups and Rob falls off the top trying to hit the one footed kick. Rob goes up again but Lynn comes back and shoves him off the top, allowing Gunner to hit a running knee for the pin at 4:57. Lynn's smile is pretty awesome. This also puts Gunner into the four way at No Surrender as the fourth man.

Rating: C. The match was so-so but the point of this is it sets up a few stories and potential matches. I'm hoping they save RVD vs. Lynn for Philadelphia because it'll guarantee a huge response no matter what the match looks like. I'm not sure I get why Gunner is going to be in the four way but it's better than some other choices. At least they seem to have a plan here, which is a big upgrade for them.

And one more time the next week.

James Storm vs. Robert Roode vs. Gunner vs. Bully Ray

One fall to a finish here. It's tornado rules too. Here's Joe almost immediately and here's Morgan just as fast to stop him. Morgan vs. Joe on Sunday also. Ray and Storm stand tall for a bit until Ray runs Storm over. Beer Money cleans house and teases going at it until Ray breaks that up. Gunner goes for a cover and Ray isn't happy with it. A big clothesline gets two on Roode.

Storm comes back in with a top rope cross body and beats up Gunner a bit.

Roode hammers on Gunner and hits the spinebuster for two. Beer Money teases it again but instead they suplex Gunner and SHOUT THEIR NAMES. Ray runs them both over and takes them both out with power stuff. Gunner hits a running knee to Ray's head for the pin at 5:00. That was nice as he was left in the background and then stole the pin.

Rating: C. This was ok but it was nothing great. I wish this had been the way the BFG Final went at the PPV because it would make more sense but I guess they need to flesh out the card more and have some overly complicated rules. Not bad here and Gunner winning was a nice surprise also. Nothing great but not bad.

Here's the payoff at No Surrender 2011.

Bound For Glory Series: Gunner vs. Robert Roode

If this ends in anything but a submission, Ray wins. Therefore, there's zero reason why he shouldn't come out and clock one of these guys to have the match end in about three seconds. Roode takes it to the mat quickly and Gunner breaks it off to get to a stalemate. The fans are all behind Roode. They do some nice technical stuff to get to the mat as they fight over a hammerlock.

Roode tries the Fujiwara Armbar but Gunner hits the floor. Bobby gets to the arm and wraps it around the post. Gunner misses a charge and hits the post shoulder first again. Back inside and Roode works over the shoulder even more. You can't fault him for lacking psychology. Gunner grabs a DDT to break things up and go after the neck of Roode. Roode escapes a full nelson but Gunner takes him down again and chokes a lot.

Gunner gets a neckbreaker and hooks a neck crank. Off to a headscissors which doesn't last long. Roode escapes a neckbreaker and tries for the armbar but Gunner escapes and takes Roode down with a short clothesline. Now Gunner gets the full nelson but he can't hook it fully because of the arm. Roode rams him into the corner about five times and the hold is broken.

Gunner misses a right hand and there's the Fujiwara Armbar but Gunner escapes. Gunner charges into the spinebuster and both guys are down.

There's an elbow by Gunner but he gets caught in the armbar again. After nearly tapping he grabs the rope. The crowd isn't into this at all for the most part but it's not bad. Gunner gets his running knee finisher out of nowhere but Roode is on his knees quickly. He tries an F5 but gets caught in the armbar again and is dragged back to the middle for a Crippler Crossface for the tap at 12:07.

Rating: C. See, the problem here is that neither guy is really known for submissions so we weren't sure when to expect the match to end so we didn't know what was coming. Not a terrible match but oddly enough Storm vs. Ray with Ray stalling forever was probably a more interesting match. This was way too technical and it didn't work for the most part. Not bad or anything, but pretty bland.

Here's a pretty big PPV match at Genesis 2012.

Gunner vs. Rob Van Dam

Rematch from Impact after the weak ending. They actually go to the mat to start as Gunner is getting frustrated. Rollup gets two for RVD. Crucifix gets one and it's a standoff. Gunner takes over with strikes and we head to the floor. Van Dam gets in a kick to take over and sends Gunner back in, but has to chase Flair off. He gets crotched on top but throws Gunner down on the way back in.

Top rope cross body gets two. Top rope kick sets up Rolling Thunder for two. Gunner rolls to the floor so RVD dives, only to have Flair pull Gunner out of the way. With Flair distracting the referee, Gunner DDTs him on the floor to basically kill him. He's out cold and that's enough for the pin at 6:52. Man that match went by fast.

Rating: D+. Not a bad match but too short to mean anything. I've heard Van Dam's contract is up in March so maybe this is a way to write him off TV for a few months in case he doesn't re-sign? If so it's a good thing for him to be jobbing on his way out. Still though, match wasn't much and Gunner is still just kind of there.

And another at Against All Odds 2012.

Gunner vs. Garrett Bischoff

Garrett comes out to Hulk's music. Garrett controls to start with his usual stuff. He's in the workout pants still. Gunner takes over for a few moments until Garrett hooks a backslide and front facelock. At this point he has less of a moveset than Andy from Tough Enough. Gunner pulls him into the middle buckle and takes over again.

The beating goes on for several minutes and there's nothing to say. It's a guy with experience and some ring skills beating on a guy who knows a total of about 5 moves. This is getting ten minutes on PPV in the second to last match on the card, making it longer than the tag team title match. Gunner works over the neck for the most part.

Eric gets in Garrett's face so Hogan decks him. Gunner hits probably his fourth neckbreaker but on the next attempt Garrett grabs the rope. Hogan picks up the towel but Garrett says no. And then Gunner DDTs him for the pin at 11:57. Yes, it actually got that much time. Why does this surprise me?

Rating: F. There is no justification for this match to get this much time on a PPV. None. I can't stand this story because it's not about Garrett or Gunner. It's about Hogan, just like it always is. Hogan isn't putting anyone over, because that would make him look weak and Impact Wrestling is all about him and Bischoff. I know I sound like some whiny fan boy here but this has been old since it started and it's just going to keep going. How many people can't get time on a PPV so that Eric's son can be out there and bore everyone to death?

Gunner would disappear for a bit before returning to be James Storm's partner at Slammiversary 2013.

Tag Titles: James Storm/Gunner vs. Hernandez/Chavo Guerrero vs. Bad Influence vs. Bobby Roode/Austin Aries

Chavo and Hernandez are defending, this is under elimination rules and Storm has a badly hurt leg. Chavo and Daniels get things going with Daniels getting caught between right hands from both champions. Off to SuperMex to face Aries, with the latter jumping into a fall away slam.

Back to Chavo who immediately pulls the now legal Roode into a headlock. Off to Storm vs. Roode and James can actually move. He throws a few right hands to take Roode down and it's off to Gunner.

Bobby tags in Gunner as everything breaks down. Hernandez puts Roode on his shoulder for the backbreaker but Chavo suplexes Aries onto Hernandez's other shoulder for a double backbreaker. That's SCARY power. Storm and Gunner whip Roode and Aries into each other before Bad Influence comes in to stomp both guys down. Hernandez gets a running start to jump over the top rope and clothesline both guys down for two on Daniels. Kaz breaks up the delayed suplex on Daniels with a kick to Hernandez's back before coming in legally.

After some more kicks to the legs of Hernandez it's off to Roode for a stomping in the corner. Aries comes in with the slingshot hilo for two before putting on a front facelock. The fans chant for Aries but Hernandez suplexes both Aries and Roode down at the same time. Kaz gets the tag but Chavo comes in as well to clean house. There are Three Amigos to Kaz but Daniels sneaks in for Angel's Wings on Chavo. Hernandez runs over Aries and Border Tosses Kaz, allowing the frog splash from Chavo to connect. Daniels breaks it up with a title belt for a DQ elimination at 10:52.

Aries immediately rolls up Chavo for the elimination at 11:10, leaving us with Aries/Roode and Storm/Gunner. Aries and Roode double team Gunner in the corner but he comes back with some running clotheslines. There's the tag to Storm who pounds away on Roode and DDTs Aries down. Back to Gunner who catapults Aries into a Storm DDT for two. There's the Gun Rack (Torture Rack) to Roode but Aries kicks Gunner in the ribs to break it up. The spinebuster from Roode sets up the 450 from Aries but it's only good for two. Roode throws in a title belt but it's the Last Call and Gun Rack to Aries for the submission and the titles at 16:28.

Rating: B. Another good match as this show is on a roll so far. I'm glad Storm is healthy enough to do the limited stuff he could do out there and Gunner looked solid as well. Hopefully we never have to see the other three teams fight again as the feud has been done to death already as the tag titles just need fresh blood now.

The new champions would team together in a six man on Impact, June 6, 2013.

Austin Aries/Bobby Roode/Kenny King vs. Chris Sabin/Gunner/James Storm

Sabin starts with an armdrag to take King down before sending him into the champions' corner. Everything breaks down in a hurry with Roode and company bailing to the floor. Sabin dives on all three of them at once to fire up the crowd. Back in and Roode suplexes Sabin down before getting two off a knee drop. Off to Storm for a Beer Money reunion with James cleaning house until Roode clotheslines him down to take over. Aries comes in with a slingshot splash for two.

King hits a slingshot legdrop for two of his own before it's back to Roode for some double teaming. Storm sends Aries into Roode to get himself a breather and the hot tag off to the hometown boy Gunner. Everything breaks down and Roode hits the spinebuster on Gunner to take him down. Aries loads up the suicide dive but gets kicked in the head by Sabin. All Hail Sabin (the name for that piledriver kind of move Sabin has been using) pins King at 6:39.

Rating: C. This was your usual formula tag match but without enough time to really get anything going. Having all three new champions against their challengers is fine as you can combine both stories into a single match. This worked fine for what it was but hopefully they can do something new with the divisions instead of just doing the same stuff over and over again.

Here's a chance for Chavo Guerrero/Hernandez to get a title shot on Impact, September 19, 2013.

Hernandez vs. Gunner

Hernandez runs Gunner over to start and drapes him ribs first over the top rope. The over the shoulder backbreaker gets two on Gunner and Hernandez hits the run down the running dive from the ramp to the ring for two. Gunner counters a suplex into a slingshot suplex to put Hernandez down again. A slam puts SuperMex down and Sheamus' Irish Curse (Rock Bottom backbreaker) is good for the pin for Gunner at 4:17.

Rating: D+. This wasn't awful actually but I have zero interest in seeing Chavo and Hernandez on the same planet, let alone on the same team, ever again. They're just not interesting at all and they never have been. Nothing much to see here, but it would imply another team gets the shot at BFG, thank goodness.

After the team lost the titles and split, Gunner would win the Feast or Fired briefcase for a World Title shot, which he cashed in on Impact, February 20, 2014.

TNA World Title: Magnus vs. Gunner

This is no countout and No DQ. After the Big Match Intros, Magnus bails to the floor before any contact is made. Back in and Gunner works on a wristlock but gets reversed into a headlock. The hold stays on for about two and a half minutes before Gunner comes back with a back elbow and a clothesline. Magnus comes right back with a knee to the back to send Gunner outside. The champ calls for help from the back but gets the Wolves and Storm instead as we take a break.

Back with Magnus putting on a camel clutch as Tenay tells us this is No DQ and No countout, which I don't remember being announced at first. Gunner fights up so Magnus changes to a sleeper, only to get caught in a belly to back suplex. It's Magnus up first and the top rope elbow gets two. Magnus goes to the floor and gets the title belt but Gunner lifts him into a fireman's carry. The champ escapes and both guys try cross bodies to give us another stalemate.

Ethan and the Bro Mans come in but the Wolves and Storm immediately come in to counter and they fight to the back. Gunner powerbombs Magnus down and hits a top rope headbutt to the ribs. Spud runs out and puts Magnus' foot on the ropes and Gunner is TICKED. He goes after the Rockstar but gets blasted in the head with the title for a close two. Storm comes back out as Gunner starts Hulking Up. A Rock Bottom lays out Magnus and Gunner goes up again, only to have Storm superkick him out of the air, giving Magnus the pin at 16:38.

Rating: C+. This was a good match but the constant interference needs to calm down for a bit. I do like Storm turning as it means we don't have to

deal with him being the guy who used to be world champion a few years ago for two weeks. The match was going for an epic showdown but that doesn't really work when we've been told about Gunner's backstory over the span of two hours instead of say two months. Still though, good stuff and an actual match instead of the insanity with Sting and AJ's shots at Magnus.

Here's the first of many grudge matches between the two at Lockdown 2014.

James Storm vs. Gunner

New music and long tights for James tonight. They start fighting on the ramp and Storm gets in a good shot early. Gunner rams him into the cage and suplexes him on the floor before going to get some chairs. He throws three of them into the cage but Storm sends him into the steps to slow Gunner down. Storm sends him into the cage and slams the cage door on Gunner's head. He demands a count and we get the opening bell followed by a four count.

Storm wedges a chair into the corner and takes Gunner down with a jumping DDT for five. Gunner tries to get up but gets choked down by a tag rope and dropped throat first across the top rope. James ties the rope around Gunner's throat and ties it to the rope but Gunner rips it away, only to be taken down by a low blow. Gunner no sells some ramming into the buckle and rams his own head into the same buckle for good measure.

Some running knees including one to Storm's head have Storm in trouble and Gunner pulls the top of the steps into the ring. A hard shot to James' head gets eight but he comes back with a quick Closing Time (Codebreaker) before ramming Gunner into the chair in the corner. James blasts him in the back with the chair but Gunner is getting that look in his eyes. He fights up and scores with a spear and an F5 as the fans think this is awesome. Storm tries to grab the chair but Gunner stands on it to thwart the Cowboy's plans.

Gunner slams him down again and goes up, only to have Storm throw the chair at Gunner's head on the way down for seven. Another hard shot to the back gets five and Storm sets up some chairs in the ring. He loads up the Eye of the Storm but Gunner gets to the ropes in the corner. Both guys climb to the middle rope and ram each other into the cage until

Gunner superplexes him through the chairs for the win at 12:02.

Rating: B. Good but not great last man standing match here as they beat a lot of tar out of each other. Gunner getting a win over a former world champion on pay per view isn't going to hurt anything but I just don't see a top level guy in him. The ending spot and chair pelting spot looked good and the match was a lot of fun, which is what matters here.

And another on Impact, March 27, 2014.

Gunner vs. James Storm

This is an Unlocked match, which is another name for a street fight. The fight is on in the aisle again and Gunner quickly sets up a table. Storm gets in a right hand before the table is completely set so he finishes Gunner's job. Gunner is whipped knees first into the steps as Tenay tells us we'll see Ethan and Willow's confrontation before the show ends. A running knee to Gunner's head knocks him from the apron to the floor. They haven't been in the ring yet.

Storm suplexes Gunner onto the ramp but gets sent into the steps for his efforts. Gunner nails him in the ribs with a chair and they finally get inside. The Cowboy comes back with a middle rope DDT of all things for no cover as we take a break. Back with Storm loading up a chair in the corner but getting reversed by Gunner. They slug it out with trashcan lids before Storm gets speared down for two.

Storm counters a sunset flip into a catapult, sending Gunner face first into the chair. A Backstabber sets up a VERY long top rope elbow to give Storm a near fall. Storm pulls out a beer bottle but the distraction lets Gunner spear him through the ropes and through the table on the floor ala Edge and Mick Foley. That only gets two so Gunner sets up two chairs (one of which is broken) in the middle of the ring.

A superplex through the chairs (Storm barely hit them) is enough for two in a nice throwback to the ending at Lockdown. Storm comes back with a Closing Time and a pair of Last Calls for two. James gets the beer bottle but Gunner finds his own to lay out Storm. An F5 is enough to pin the Cowboy at 15:03.

Rating: B+. This was one heck of a fight with both guys beating the tar out of each other. There's something awesome about two men just hammering each other until one of them can't get up. I don't like the story here though as the match was tacked on to the feud after the previous match should have ended things. Still though, awesome stuff.

And the final one from Sacrifice 2014.

James Storm vs. Gunner

I quit match. They slug it out to start with Storm getting the better of it and knocking Gunner out to the floor. Storm whips him into the barricade hard enough to knock it over on top of Gunner. They fight over the steps with Gunner taking over with a hard clothesline. Gunner throws him back inside and finds a trashcan filled with toys. Storm kicks the ropes low into Gunner as they come back inside before an Elevated Stunner (think Orton) but Gunner won't quit.

A pair of chair shots still won't make Gunner quit and a cookie sheet still doesn't do the trick. Storm chokes away in the corner until Gunner FINALLY comes back with a running knee to the face to take over. It's time for the first weapon from Gunner as he grabs a trashcan lid and blasts Storm in the head over and over. Storm finally gets one of his own for a duel but Gunner keeps control.

Gunner nails a swan dive but this time it's Storm that won't quit. Instead Gunner tries a charge but goes hard into the post to change control again. Storm sends him into the post one more time and plants Gunner with an Elevated DDT on the floor. Naturally Gunner isn't ready to quit yet and Storm is getting frustrated.

Storm finds the beer bottle and blasts Gunner in the head to cut him open but of course Gunner won't quit. Off to a Boston crab of all things but Gunner is quickly in the ropes. Some belt shots to the back have Gunner in trouble and there's the Last Call to put him down again. He still won't quit though so Storm just rips at the cut to draw more blood. Gunner rams his own head into the buckle and screams NEVER before hitting three straight F5s.

With nothing else to do, Gunner sets up the two chairs in the ring and bridges the barricade across it. A HUGE superplex puts Storm through the steel and both guys are almost done. Gunner picks up a piece of the beer bottle and drives it into Storm's head to make him quit at 19:04.

Rating: B-. Now NEVER LET THEM FIGHT AGAIN. Yeah the match wasn't bad but I just don't need to see this match ever again. We get it: Gunner can beat James Storm. Now let us find out what he can do against someone else. Gunner getting the spot instead of Young makes more sense, but I guess Young's goofiness is just better for business. Or something.

Gunner is a guy that may not be the most interesting or detailed guy in history but he's incredibly intense and has a great look. I met him at a house show once and the guy is as polite and professional as you could ask for. He'll also shake your hand off with one of the firmest grips you'll ever find. He's grown on me which is surprising given that I didn't care about him one bit when he started.

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