

Wrestler of the Day – September 23: Rene Dupree

Today is the French Tickler himself Rene Dupree.

Dupree started in his father's Grand Prix Wrestling promotion in Montreal back in 1997. We'll look at this match from some point in 1998, meaning Renee is about 14 years old.

Rene Dupree vs. Gary Williams

Williams is billed as the Wildman. The footage is REALLY bad here and looks like fan cam footage at best. Dupree seems to be the face here which makes sense given that it's his dad's promotion. Williams complains of a hair pull to start and they fight over a top wristlock with no one getting anywhere. After killing off a few seconds with that, Rene slams Gary's head onto the mat, sending him out to the floor for a breather.

Back in and Williams runs him over a few times, only to eat a nice dropkick, knocking Gary back to the floor. A suplex brings Gary back in and sends him rolling outside again as the stalling continues. Inside again with Williams taking over and hitting the running crotch attack to the back. We hit the chinlock on Dupree for a few moments before Williams hammers away in the corner.

Dupree finally blocks a ram into a buckle but walks into a clothesline. A legdrop gets two for Gary and we're back to the chinlock. Back up and another clothesline gets two on Rene before Williams throws him out to the floor. Gary gets two off a suplex and it's off to another chinlock. Rene fights up and it's a double clothesline to put both guys down. It's Dupree up first and hammering away in the corner but getting shoved down for two.

Gary throws him outside for about the third time and for once follows him out for some brawling. Williams sends Rene into the barricade before nailing a swinging neckbreaker back inside. Rene comes back with a powerslam for two and a Russian legsweep gets the same. A side slam

plants Rene for the pin but he gets his foot on the ropes. The referee catches it just late enough that Williams thinks he's won, allowing Rene to grab a rollup for the pin.

Rating: D+. I'm giving this a break as both guys were rookies at this point. However, this really needed to be a lot shorter as it felt like it just kept going. The match ran about fifteen minutes and could have had five minutes cut out of it. Neither guy stood out and the match felt like they were filling in a lot of time, which they probably were given their level of experience.

We'll jump ahead a few years to Rene signing with WWE and becoming part of La Resistance with Sylvan Grenier. Here they are challenging for the Raw Tag Team Titles at Bad Blood 2003.

Raw Tag Titles: La Resistance vs. RVD/Kane

You can more or less see the ending from here. The heels are Sylvan Grenier and Rene Dupree in case you didn't know. To my complete lack of shock and dismay, this is nothing that couldn't be on Raw. I mean there is nothing to note here at all. This could be at any house show or Raw but on PPV? Really? The heels are both on the floor and Van Dam dives, naturally hitting all three of them. A double flapjack ends this. It couldn't have come faster.

Rating: D+. Again, WHY IS THIS ON PPV? That's the problem with the whole first hour here. I could see an argument for the two title matches, but seriously, none of this has been PPV quality. The matches are ok, but that's the problem: they're just ok. Nothing at all here is making me want to watch this show at all and it's never something I'm going to watch again. I just want to get to the end of this show and forget about it.

Here's a defense at Summerslam 2003.

Raw Tag Titles: Dudley Boyz vs. La Resistance

The Dudleyz are challenging and the EVIL foreigners are Rene Dupree and Sylvain Grenier. Bubba of course comes out with an American flag to hammer in the face status. The whole patriotism thing was a big deal in this feud as the third member of La Resistance, an American named Rob Conway, pretended to be a soldier to sneak up on the Dudleyz. It's a brawl to start in the aisle with the challengers in full control.

D-Von chokes Dupree with the robe to start before armbarring Grenier down. A slam and a legdrop gets two on Sylvain and it's off to Bubba for the power brawling. He puts Grenier in the Tree of Woe and stands on his crotch to make the French guy scream. The Dudleys clear the ring but Grenier gets in a cheap shot to give the champions control on Bubba. A double shoulder puts Bubba down for two as the USA chant starts up.

Back to Dupree for a bearhug, which isn't often a move you see on a fat man like Bubba. Some headbutts break up hold but Bubba walks into a spinebuster for two. Bubba punches his way over to the hot tag (four minutes into the match) and D-Von cleans house. A rollup gets two on Grenier as everything breaks down. D-Von walks into a double spinebuster for two but it's What's Up to Dupree. The 3D lays out Dupree but Grenier makes save. Now a cameraman lays out D-Von with a camera to the head to retain the titles. It's Rob Conway of course.

Rating: D+. That's a pretty lame choice for an opener. Not only did the fans not get what they wanted but the match sucked as well. This was a dark time for the tag team division and there was no reason at all for there to be two sets of titles at this point. At the end of the day there wasn't nearly enough depth and it made for lame matches like this. The Dudleys would get the belts next month.

With the tag division such a mess, the idea was to just throw four teams into one match at Wrestlemania XX.

Raw Tag Titles: La Resistance vs. Dudley Boyz vs. Garrison Cade/Mark Jindrak vs. Booker T/Rob Van Dam

Booker and RVD are defending and this is one fall to a finish. Booker has an AWFUL remix of his song here so hopefully they drop the belts so we don't have to hear it again. Van Dam and Dupree get us going with Rob

monkey flipping him down. Booker comes in with a side kick for two and a hip toss for an interfering Conway. Rene is knocked into the Dudley corner for a tag off to Bubba with the Dudley getting two off a neckbreaker. Booker comes back with a side kick but D-Von tags himself in before the cover. RVD jumps in with a kick to the face of D-Von but there was no tag so it's Jindrak vs. Booker instead.

Cade and Jindrak take over on Booker in the corner but Rene steals a tag to take over. This match needs to end already. We're four minutes in and I'm already bored. Conway hooks a bow and arrow hold which goes on WAY longer than needed. Booker fights out with a spinebuster for no cover but it's not hot tag to RVD. Everything breaks down but D-Von breaks up the Five Star. It's Booker vs. D-Von but Cade breaks up 3D. The scissors kick and Five Star are enough to pin Conway and retain the titles.

Rating: D. Sacre bleu what a waste of my time. No one card about this match because the tag division was so dead at this point that almost every team was just thrown together. Since this is Wrestlemania though, there's ANOTHER four way tag match later tonight. Nothing to see here and the match sucked on all levels. Let's get on to ANYTHING else.

Dupree would get a singles run and feuded with John Cena over the US Title over the summer of 2004. Here they are at Judgment Day 2004.

US Title: John Cena vs. Rene Dupree

Surprisingly enough Cena comes out first here. It's amazing to hear Cena almost universally cheered. Cena rhymes a bit before the match starts and makes fun of the Spurs who had lost to the Lakers in the playoffs recently. To be fair to Dupree, he's 20 here and was a champion at 19 which is a WWE record. Cena hammers him down but a boot in the corner stops him for what must have been a good four seconds.

We hit the floor for a bit where Cena hits the post. Again Cena misses a charge and hits the floor which has become a running theme in this match. He can't get anything going here and Dupree keeps up the offense. Bear hug goes on by Dupree just to reaffirm that he's evil. I know they've happened but

how often does a face not named Sammartino use a bear hug?

This eats up awhile until Cena gets a jawbreaker to escape. Cena cranks it up a bit and a sidewalk slam puts Dupree down. Five Knuckle Shuffle misses as Dupree casually rolls out of the way. That makes me chuckle for some reason. Spinebuster sets up the French Tickler (don't ask) and after a brief comeback Cena walks into a DDT for still no cover. FU is countered into a neckbreaker for two. A few pinning combinations by Cena get two each but the FU out of nowhere ends this.

Rating: C. This was just ok. I don't think anyone ever bought Dupree as a threat here which hurts things a bit but not horribly. Cena needed a win like this on PPV as he only won the title a month or so earlier. Not a horrible match but really just one of those where it came and went with not many people buying into the hype of it.

Another title shot at Great American Bash 2004.

US Title: John Cena vs. Rene Dupree vs. Booker T vs. Rob Van Dam

This is elimination rules and Cena is champion coming in. Cena fires up the crowd a bit and that's a LOUD chant for him. He makes gay jokes about Angle in his pre-match rap. Also RVD likes marijuana, Booker used to be GI Bro and Rene Dupree wants to be Cena. This is also a Navy town so Rene is gay right? Booker and RVD go at it as do John and Rene to start us off. This is under tornado rules.

Rob and Booker fight to the floor. I think Rene is the only heel here but I'm not sure on Booker. Off to Rene vs. RVD. Booker is chilling on the floor to avoid getting beaten up which is really smart strategy. Yeah Booker is officially a heel in this. He turned on RVD a few weeks back. See? Cole can be useful at times. Rene hooks a chinlock on RVD to waste some time. Rob fights back and hits a split legged moonsault for two.

Rolling Thunder gets the same. Cena does something for the first time in about four minutes, picking up Rene on the floor, only to get flipped

onto by RVD. Cena vs. Rob in the ring now and they exchange near falls. RVD slides to the floor and tells Booker to get in. They get in an argument so RVD throws Booker in for a beating. Cena slides to the floor and throws Rene in to replace him. Cena and RVD are just kind of chilling on the floor.

Dupree hits a powerslam and does the French Tickler (don't ask) but walks into a Booker spinebuster. Five Star hits Rene but there's no cover. Cena goes up and gets kicked off by RVD. Five Star hits Booker this time but Cena rolls in and cradles Van Dam for the first elimination. Booker and Dupree team up on Cena with Booker hitting the side kick for two. Rene got the cover and Booker isn't thrilled with that.

Cena takes advantage of their argument to beat them both up. The fans aren't exactly thrilled by this match either. Throwback to Booker and Cena pumps it up. FU (noticeably different than the modern version) puts down Dupree. Booker hits an axe kick on Cena and eliminates Rene. So it's down to one on one now. Side slam gets two and what appeared to be a fast count. Off to a chinlock to kill some time.

The announcers talk about a mini feud Cena has had with Taker. Today, that's a Wrestlemania dream match. Here, it's a two week filler feud. Booker chops away in the corner and gets the Jack Brisco spinning sunset flip out of the corner for two. Axe kick misses though and the FU keeps the title on Cena.

Rating: C-. Not bad here, but the problem was in the match structure. With it being elimination rules, it actually made things easier on Cena. Like you saw with Booker and Dupree, you can pretty much just chill on the floor for two eliminations and then get it down to a one on one match. Then again, Cena pinned RVD first anyway so he would have won either way, which again begs the question of why it wasn't just one fall. That would be because they needed to fill an extra seven minutes.

Here's a very unique match on Smackdown, August 12, 2004.

Team Cena vs. Team Booker T.

John Cena, Rob Van Dam, Charlie Haas

Booker T., Rene Dupree, Luther Reigns

This is a very interesting idea. It's called a Summer Relay match. The match is one fall to a finish and it's going to be Rob Van Dam vs. Booker T. to start. They'll wrestle for five minutes (assuming there's no fall) and then Booker's team can send in a replacement (due to winning a coin toss) for another five minute period. After those five minutes (ten minutes total), Cena's team can send in a replacement. After five more minutes (fifteen total), Booker's team gets to send in a replacement. These five minute periods alternate until someone gets a fall. To my knowledge, this is the only time this gimmick was ever used.

Cena has a rap about his team before the match and hits on Jackie Gayda a bit. It's Rob Van Dam vs. Booker to get things going and the clock begins. Booker takes over in the corner to start and chops away before hitting a bad looking hot shot. A hook kick to the face gets two on Rob and we hit the arm hold. Some chops in the corner have Rob in even more trouble but he comes back with a hard kick to the face. Rob nails some more kicks for two before kicking Booker in the jaw again. He heads up top and connects with the Five Star but stays down too long, allowing the clock to run out.

Luther Reigns comes in next as another five minute period begins. He hammers on the downed Van Dam and we take a break. Back with a minute left in the period and Rob coming back with some right hands. A springboard kick to the jaw sets up Rolling Thunder but the delayed cover only gets two. Reigns nails a spinebuster but misses a knee drop as the period ends and Charlie Haas comes in.

Charlie goes after the leg and puts on a kind of Indian Deathlock to take over. He cranks on the knee even more but Luther fights up and hits a release butterfly suplex. A big belly to back suplex gets two for Luther and we take a break. Back with Dupree getting two on Haas before chopping away in the corner. Rene goes up but gets armdragged down to put both guys on the mat. A good looking series of Rolling Germans get some two counts for Charlie as frustration is setting in.

Booker gets in a cheap shot from the floor and Dupree puts on an STF

(Cena hadn't started using it yet) until the period ends. It's Cena coming in but he checks on Charlie before going after Dupree. Cena hammers away but gets caught by a neckbreaker for two. Off to a camel clutch on John for a minute or so before Cena comes back with a kind of cutter to escape. A big clothesline puts Dupree down but he plants Cena with a spinebuster. It's time for the French Tickler (a stupid dance) but Cena avoids the punch and grabs a flapjack. There's the Shuffle but Rene grabs the ropes to counter the FU.

Booker comes in for the showdown with Cena as they're about to start a best of five series for Booker's US Title. It's Booker in early control and he does You Can't See Me before dropping a knee for two. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Cena avoids a side kick, sending Booker out to the floor. Van Dam gets in a few shots (Tazz: "That's not kosher!") before Booker is sent back inside for a rollup and the pin by Cena.

Rating: C. Well that was....something. It was basically a series of hot tag sequences which makes for an odd match. I can see why they didn't go back to the idea as it's pretty easy to understand but doesn't work for a match concept. This wasn't a disaster but it's pretty clear why we never saw it again.

Rene would be paired with Kenzo Suzuki and win the Smackdown Tag Team Titles in late 2004. Here they are defending at No Mercy 2004.

Smackdown Tag Titles: Kenzo Suzuki/Rene Dupree vs. Rob Van Dam/Rey Mysterio

I vaguely remember Suzuki and Dupree as champions. My guess is that there's a reason I don't remember more. I know I remember thinking Kenzo bored me to death. Kenzo tries to sing Born in the USA pre match. Rob and Rene start us off. A quick powerbomb attempt is countered into a pin attempt by Rob and we get a standoff. Rey tags himself in and the challengers speed things up, resulting in a dropkick by Rey for two.

Suzuki comes in. Cole refers to him by his nickname of the bronze warrior, causing Tazz to say "Do you think he aspires to be a golden warrior?" Well at least it wasn't about pigeons. The champs are both sent to the floor and the challengers hit stereo dives. Cole: "Only on

Smackdown!" Except when it's on PPV right Cole? Rob vs. Kenzo in the ring now but Rob is quickly send to the floor as Rene pushed him off the top.

We hear about Kenzo winning the Young Lions Cup and it's back to Rene for a neck crank. A knee drop by Kenzo gets two. There's the hot tag to Rey (minus the hot part) who cleans house and destroys Kenzo. Seated senton gets two. Rene breaks up the 619 but Rob breaks up a powerbomb. Rolling Thunder takes out Dupree and now the 619 connects. Dupree breaks up the West Coast Pop though, only to get taken out by Van Dam. Kenzo cradles Mysterio and grabs the rope for the pin.

Rating: C-. It wasn't horrible but you could really see that the tag titles were in shambles at this point. To be fair they had been for years so that's hardly breaking news, but you get the idea. Not much of a match but it didn't suck, which is really all you can ask for from these thrown together matches.

We'll jump ahead a few months to Sunday Night Heat, August 14, 2005.

Rene Dupree vs. Matt Striker

Striker doesn't mean anything yet and Rene is an EVIL Frenchman with the mustache to prove it. Matt gets shoved down to start but grabs a quick rollup for two before doing Rene's French Tickler dance. A big clothesline drops Rene and he stomps Matt on the mat to take over. We hit the chinlock for a bit before a falling headbutt gets two for Dupree. He throws Matt out to the floor before taking it back inside for another chinlock. Striker fights up and nails a slam followed by a high cross body for two. Dupree punches him out of the air though and nails a cobra clutch slam for the pin.

Rating: D+. Just a somewhat lengthy squash here without much to it. Dupree just didn't do it for me at this point and I think WWE was starting to give up on him as well. On the other hand you have Striker, who never quite worked as a wrestler either. He doesn't have the look for it and it's hard to get behind someone that small without anything interesting about him.

Dupree would go to the new ECW and appear on the September 12, 2006

show.

Rene Dupree vs. Balls Mahoney

Dupree jumps him to start but Balls comes back with the signature punches in the corner. A charge hits the post for Mahoney though and a bottom rope splash gets two for Rene. Taz: "That's extreme?" A middle rope elbow gets the same and I can't believe I'm watching this on ECW.

I get the idea that they're going with to have Dupree as a heel in ECW, but it doesn't change the fact that we've had guys like Shannon Moore, Mike Knox and Rene Dupree on this show. Mahoney snaps off the Nutcracker Sweet (sitout spinebuster) for two and they head to the floor. Balls gets a chair but Thorn kicks him into the steps, giving Dupree the pin.

Rating: D. Like I said, at the end of the day you can only get so into a match about Rene Dupree. Mahoney is one of the holdovers from the original ECW who at least looks like he belongs on a show about Extreme wrestling. This wasn't good by almost any standard but it set up Thorn vs. Mahoney which is less dull than this was.

Dupree would head to Japan soon after this and appeared for the Hustle promotion on September 22, 2007.

Wataru Sakata vs. Rene Dupree

They chop it out to start until Rene nails a running clothesline to take over. A discus punch sends Sakata into the corner and Rene hammers away. Wataru kicks him off the top rope and nails another kick to send Rene HARD into the barricade, busting him open. Dupree can barely stand up but comes back with a right hand to stagger Sakata. He can't nail a powerbomb though and Wataru nails a piledriver for two.

We hit the chinlock on Rene followed by some kicks to the back. Sakata takes off a turnbuckle pad and sends Rene face first into the post. A release overhead belly to belly sends Rene flying but he's able to pop up and crotch Sakata with a dropkick. Wataru is still able to break up a superplex and gets two off a top rope double stomp. A quick BK Bomb gets two for Rene but he gets kicked in the ribs and caught in an abdominal

stretch. That goes nowhere so Sakata chokes him out for the win.

Rating: B-. I was totally buying into the story near the end here with Rene busted open and injured and having to survive everything Sakata threw at him. I had no idea what was going on with the story or who the characters were but they were able to tell a story with their actions. That's really impressive stuff and what people mean by wrestling being an art form.

We'll jump ahead a few years with Rene wrestling for the Wrestle-1 promotion on September 22, 2013.

Rene Dupree vs. Tajiri

They take each other into the corner to start and it's actually a clean break. Rene gets him on the mat but Tajiri spins out and cranks on the arm. Back up and we get a test of strength until Tajiri takes him down in a top wristlock. We get some nice mat work with a nice series of counters with both guys trying to control the arm. Rene gets two off a shoulder block and we hit the headlock on Tajiri. Some armdrags send Dupree out to the floor and things slow way down.

Back in and Rene offers a handshake while crossing his heart that he won't cheat. Naturally he dropkicks Tajiri before hitting a cartwheel elbow in the corner. Rene takes him down with an abdominal stretch on the mat before going to a regular chinlock. Dupree goes up top but gets kicked in the head. We get to the series of Tajiri kicks with a big superkick getting two. A quick brainbuster gets two for Dupree but he makes the mistake of charging into the Tarantula. The Buzzsaw Kick is enough to give Tajiri the pin.

Rating: C+. Not bad here with both guys having a different style and making it work. The technical stuff was a nice thing to see at the beginning before they got into the faster paced back and forth stuff. Tajiri's kicks were crisp as always and that Buzzsaw Kicks looked lethal. I've always liked Tajiri and he still looked good here.

We'll wrap it up with Rene appearing at One Night Only: Global Impact Japan for TNA.

Keiji Mutoh/Rob Terry/Taiyo Kea vs. Masayuki Kono/Rene Dupree/Samoa Joe

Joe's team gets the jobber treatment and Mutoh might retire if he loses. Joe and Kea get things going with Joe hammering away in the corner, only to have Kea no sell most of the shots. A big boot has little effect on Joe and an elbow to Kea's jaw has the same result. Off to Terry vs. Dupree for a posedown before Renee dropkicks Terry's knee out. Kono comes in to try a double suplex but Terry suplexes both of them at the same time.

Mutoh gets the tag for the power drive elbow before putting Kono in an STF. Back to Kea for chops followed by Terry for some cranking on the arm. Mutoh puts on a sleeper but Dupree gets in a cheap shot. Joe glares at his partner for the cheap shot and does the same thing to Kono, even going so far as to save Mutoh. Apparently he's fine with backslashing Mutoh for two and putting on the Koquina Clutch but everything breaks down.

Things settle down and Mutoh mostly misses a dropkick to Joe and the tag brings in Kea. A Russian legsweep gets two on Joe but he comes back with a powerslam. Off to Kono who gets caught in something resembling a running DDT. Terry gets the tag and gets the crowd to clap a lot before hitting a slow motion Jackhammer. Kea rolls away and tags in Dupree who is quickly backdropped down.

Muta comes in and takes out everyone with dragon screw legwhips before putting Renee in a Figure Four. Kono makes a save so Muta hits Dupree with a Shining Wizard but everything breaks down. Members of the Desperadoes stable comes in to attack Mutoh but Joe won't help them. He takes a chair from Dupree and headbutts him before walking out, allowing Mutoh to hit the Shining Wizard for the pin on Dupree.

Rating: D+. Well you knew Mutoh wasn't jobbing here. This match was a big mess though with Joe wanting to do the right thing or whatever it was while all of the people interfered (and Tenay just expected us to know who they were because EVERYONE follows a year old Japanese promotion). This felt like "let's all love Mutoh" and while he deserves respect, I don't care for matches that turn into stuff like this. It wasn't terrible

or anything and the story made good sense, but it was messy.

Rene Dupree is a guy who had a great look and was decent in the ring but his appeal never made sense. He's not bad or anything and he's impressive given how young he was when he started, but he never did anything for me. His WWE stuff wasn't great but he seems to have become a much bigger deal in Japan. Dupree is talented, but he doesn't stand out all that well.

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