

Wrestler of the Day – December 10: Darren Young

Today we'll look at what you could call a pioneer in wrestling: Darren Young. We'll start things off in FCW on July 26, 2009 with Young wrestling under his real name.

Donny Marlow vs. Fred Rosser

Marlow is better known as Camacho and this is Fred's TV debut. Feeling out process to start with Donny driving him into the corner to start but getting caught in a headlock. Fred gets two off a clothesline but Donny pulls him off the middle rope for a crash. Commentator Dusty Rhodes freaks out because he accidentally whistles. We hit the nerve hold on Rosser for a bit before Marlow ends him with a Samoan drop.

Rating: D. Dusty kept calling this a rookie's rookie match but it doesn't make up for the match being pretty dull. Marlow is nothing special in the ring and that's the same major problem for Fred: he has a good physique but there's nothing about him that makes him stand out from the crowd.

Rosser would be in the first season of NXT and had a match on the first show, February 23, 2010.

Darren Young vs. David Otunga

Young and Punk were the comedy team of this season and it worked ok at best I thought. Punk, still with hair, says he doesn't know why he's here and doesn't know who Young is. No profile on Young but Otunga talks about being better than everyone else as he's from Hollywood. He mentions being engaged to Jennifer Hudson.

He definitely had the talking ability and the charisma but just never could do it in the ring. The tear away pants are still a cool thing for Otunga. This is perhaps the fastest match in the history of the show as Otunga hits his weird

spinebuster like slam to end it in less than forty seconds.

We'll jump past NXT to look at Young's last match as a member of the Nexus on Raw, August 16, 2010.

Darren Young vs. John Cena

No intro for Young. That's likely a bad sign. There's a good amount of time left though so this might not be so bad. We hear that WWE's Facebook has over 1 millions fans as of right now. That's kind of cool I guess. Nexus stands on the stage for this. Young actually dominates here for the most part with some basic stuff. He dropkicks the steps into Cena's head and they tease another count out. Cena is of course in 9.8 but it was a nice false finish.

Cena initiates the ending sequence but the FU is countered. STFU goes on and Young is out of Nexus. Nexus surrounds Cena after the match but cena gets away. Yep Young is about to get a beatdown. Lawler calls him Daniel Bryan for some reason as he gets destroyed.

Rating: C. This was fine. There were people actually freaking out about Cena beating Young. Are you kidding me? He beat up a guy that is most famous for looking like John Cena. Why is this supposed to be a shock or a surprise? This did what it was supposed to do and it came off fine as Nexus gets rid of its weakest guy. Fine. Back to another season of NXT on June 28, 2011.

Darren Young vs. Conor O'Brian

They fight over a tieup to start and head to the floor. Hot crowd tonight too. Back inside and Conor takes over with a clothesline. A shoulder by O'Brian gets two. Young hits a neckbreaker on the apron and both guys are down as we take a break. Back with O'Brian escaping a cravate but getting thrown down for two. Off to a neck crank by Young which doesn't last long.

Kozlov isn't here tonight either apparently as he's in Australia with the Raw roster. Chinlock doesn't work long and O'Brian hits a slingshot to send Young into the corner. Young hits the ropes and gets his head kicked off by a big boot. That looked good. Regal brings up the point that these guys know each other way too well. Young hits Three Amigos to the biggest heat he's gotten since he had a big yellow N on his chest. A Frog Splash ends this a few seconds later at 8:45.

Rating: C+. Not bad here and that big kick was the biggest part of the whole thing. The lack of pros actually helped a lot here as it was just a competition rather than about the pros, which is the point of the show. O'Brian is still dull but if he can get even a single move going for him it's an improvement.

The season just would not die so here's another NXT match on January 4, 2012.

Darren Young vs. Derrick Bateman

They have just over 4 minutes left in the video so this isn't going to last long. They start fast and Bateman gets a quick two count. They go to the floor and Young hits an atomic drop kind of move onto the apron, taking the advantage. Back in Bateman sends him into the post shoulder first and we're running out of time very fast. A running missile dropkick takes Young down. Maxine pops up and says in two weeks, she and Curtis are getting married in Vegas. Young hits his gutbuster for the pin at 3:30.

Rating: D. This was nothing other than a way to make the announcement about the wedding in a few weeks. I couldn't be happier it was short either as these two are just not interesting at all, especially Young. He's just boring and offers nothing at all of note. He never has and I can't imagine him ever doing so.

Young would make the main roster as a member of the Prime Time Players with old rival Titus O'Neil. Here they are at No Way Out 2012.

Usos vs. Titus O'Neal/Darren Young vs. Epico/Primo vs. Justin Gabriel/Tyson Kidd

#1 contenders match, even though Epico and Primo already were #1 contenders. The crack production staff cuts away from Rosa dancing to show us AW giving Epico and Primo a pep talk on the pre show. Young and O'Neal are officially the Prime Time Players. That used to be my fantasy football team name so I'm liking them more and more. Booker: "They're a little bit fruit bootyish if you know what I mean." I think this is one fall to a finish with tags.

Titus and Jey starts things off but it's quickly off to Young. You don't have to tag your partner here either. Jimmy comes in quickly with a double chop for two on Darren. The Usos tag again and Epico tags himself in off a staggered Young. Jimmy hits a Bubba Bomb on Epico who tags in Justin for some reason. Justin and Jimmy hit a stalemate, followed by a Gabriel headlock.

Jey comes in and it's the double Samoan Drop for two. Rosa yells a lot as Titus tags himself in for two on Justin. Off to Darren as Gabriel is in trouble. Justin gets in a kick but Primo tags himself in to prevent the hot tag. Epico hits a dropkick for two and it's off to a chinlock. Apparently automatic rematch clauses expire after 30 days. Ok then. Epico hits rolling belly to back suplexes for two and it's back to Primo.

He misses an elbow and there's the tag to Kidd. Tyson fires off kicks and hits a suplex on Primo. Things break down a bit and the springboard elbow drop hits knees. Things break down even more and the Usos dive onto Titus and I think Epico. Young tags himself in but Tyson knocks him off the apron. In a SWEET spot, Kidd rana Primo onto the other pile of people on the floor. Young and Primo are legal and the fireman's carry into the gutbuster give Young and O'Neal the pin at 9:33.

Rating: C. For a bonus match, this was fine. Titus and Young are as good as a set of challengers as you can ask for right now and since there are more face teams on the roster than heels, it would make sense to give them the belts so we can have some more challengers. Decent stuff here and it's good to see something resembling a division existing.

Back to singles on Smackdown, August 3, 2012.

Darren Young vs. R-Truth

Truth goes right after Young to start and pounds him into the corner and then against the ropes. AW is at ringside and has the mic again. Truth is sent to the floor and Titus gets in some shots, so here's Kofi for the save. AW throws his jacket at Kofi's head so Kofi chases him off. Truth tries to suplex Young back in but Titus trips him up for two. Kofi is back now but gets his head taken off by Titus. The distraction lets Young hit the double knee gutbuster for the pin at 1:55.

The team would be in action at Summerslam 2012.

Tag Titles: Prime Time Players vs. Kofi Kingston/R-Truth

I don't remember Kofi and Truth being champions AT ALL. Truth and Young get us going as the fans chant Kobe Bryant, referencing the joke that got AW fires. Young is taken down by an armdrag and a legdrop gets two for Truth. Truth has to fight out of the corner but gets caught in the face by a big boot for two. Back up and Truth hits a great side kick to take Titus' head off and get himself a breather. Off to Kofi to speed things up as the crowd still isn't all that interested.

Kofi chops O'Neil down but a Young distraction lets the challengers take over. Titus clotheslines Kofi down for two before suplexing Young onto Kofi's back for two. A snap powerslam gets the same for Darren and it's back to Titus for an abdominal stretch. That goes nowhere so Titus loads up a spinout Rock Bottom, only to be pulled down into a DDT. Hot tag brings in Truth to clean house and everything breaks down. Titus is sent to the floor and caught by a Kofi dive, allowing Truth to hit Little Jimmy on Darren to retain the titles.

Rating: D+. This could have been on any given Raw. The Players are a decent team but Titus is clearly the star with Young just being there. Kofi and Truth are just transitional champions before HELL NO would take the championships a few weeks later. Nothing to see here other than a filler before we get to the main events.

Time to get back in the title hunt on Smackdown, September 7, 2012.

Prime Time Players vs. Primo/Epico vs. Usos

Winners get the title shot at Night of Champions. The only team to get an intro here is the Kofi/Truth who are on commentary. This is WCW rules with three people in the ring at once. Epico and Primo stomp on I think Jey in the corner while Young is down in the other corner. This is moving around too fast to keep up with. Titus gets the tag and cleans house before trying a release suplex to his partner onto Jey, but Jey gets his knees up.

Epico dropkicks Jey to the floor but walks into a northern lights suplex from Darren for two. Epico comes out of the corner with a tornado DDT to Young but walks into a double clothesline with Jey. Jimmy gets the hot tag and cleans house as everything breaks down. A Samoan Drop puts Young down and Jimmy dives on Titus and Primo. Jey hits the top rope splash on Epico but Young steals the pin and the title shot at 4:20.

Rating: C-. This was a mess all over the place but it certainly wasn't boring. All signs would point to Titus and Young winning the titles now, as they've been beaten by the champions twice I believe, so the logical conclusion would be to have them win the third match and forget the first two. The match was too short to become a disaster and it was fast enough to be fun, but it was like the old WCW Cruiserweight matches: mostly flash and no substance, but that's ok.

That would be another failed title shot, so let's jump ahead to Hell in a Cell 2012.

Prime Time Players vs. Rey Mysterio/Sin Cara

Sin Cara and Darren start things off with Young slapping him around on the mat. Cara headscissors him down and there's the tag to Rey. Cara has what looks like a Mysterio mask on the back of his own mask. The main event for Main Event this coming week is these four teaming with Del Rio and Orton respectively. Yep the card is already falling down. Off to Titus for some power to take over on Mysterio. A double elbow by the Players take Rey down and Young comes in for some near falls.

Off to a quick reverse chinlock by Young but Titus charges into a boot in the corner to let the masked guys make a tag. Back to Cara who speeds things up and hits a top rope cross body on Titus. Cara's spinning

armdrag out of the corner is caught by Titus and he rams Cara into the corner. Back to Darren to pounds away a bit more before hitting the belly to back suplex onto the apron for two.

Back to Titus who suplexes Young onto Sin for two. JR says the Players are trying to get a big payday for a win on a major PPV. What exactly would be a minor PPV? Titus yells at Cara in the corner and tells him to speak English, which will probably be a fine for O'Neal. Titus puts on a kind of abdominal stretch before slamming him down for two. Back to Young for a backbreaker which gets two. Titus gets in a three point stance but charges into the post.

Cara hits a kind of standing Sliced Bread #2 and makes the hot tag to Rey. Mysterio speeds things up and hits a tilt-a-whirl DDT on Darren for two. JR: "Keeping up with Rey is like trying to pour smoke through a keyhole." JBL: "Who would want to do that?" Cara dives on Titus on the floor as Rey counters the gutbuster from Young into the 619 and top rope splash for the pin at 12:50.

Rating: C-. This <http://onhealthy.net/product-category/asthma/> wasn't a bad match at all but it ran too long and overstayed its welcome. These guys are a good undercard feud for the tag division (imagine THAT say six months ago) and putting them on here was as decent enough of an idea as you were going to get. Either one of these teams could get a title shot, and that's kind of cool to think about.

And a bonus match to open Survivor Series 2012.

Team Clay vs. Team Tensai

Brodus Clay, Justin Gabriel, Tyson Kidd, Sin Cara, Rey Mysterio

Tensai, Primo, Epico, Prime Time Players

This is a bonus match to fill out the card. Nothing wrong with that at all. Apparently this is the debut of the three man booth so we're getting a bit of history here. Why anyone would care about that is beyond me but I need something to talk about during these long entrances. This was also back when Tensai was all evil but was a total joke by this point, just as

he had been all along. If nothing else we get to see Rosa Mendes with black hair and those hips of hers.

Kidd works on Epico's arm to start before taking him down into a headlock. Epico is sent to the floor but manages to send Kidd face first into the apron to take over but it's quickly off to Gabriel. A sunset flip gets two for Justin and he cranks on Epico's arm as well. Back to Kidd for a headscissors before putting on another armbar. That doesn't last long as Mysterio comes in with a low dropkick for two.

Young gets the tag and is almost immediately sent face first into the middle buckle, allowing for a tag off to Sin Cara. The masked men hit a combination wheelbarrow slam/X-Factor for two on Young, sending him over to the corner for a tag off to Primo. Cara hits a quick cross body for two and a sunset flip gets the same as this is a very fast paced match. Tensai gets the tag and runs over Cara with a few slams as JBL lists off Tensai's Japanese accomplishments.

Off to Titus as Sin Cara is in a lot of trouble. Another slam puts Sin down and it's off to Primo for a camel clutch. Tensai comes back in to work over the downed Cara but goes after the rest of the team instead of covering. Sin Cara gets up for an enziguri, allowing the hot tag to Clay. Brodus cleans house and the Players, Epico and Primo are sent to the floor. Kidd and Gabriel hit stereo dives to take out the cousins followed by Asai moonsaults from Cara and Mysterio to take out the Players. Awesome sequence.

The monsters are going at it back inside and Clay botches his high collar suplex, making it into more of a lifting downward spiral. Tensai avoids a charge in the corner and shoulders Brodus down, setting up a backsplash for the elimination. Gabriel comes in with some kicks to the side but gets taken down by a big shoulder block. Off to Titus for an abdominal stretch followed by a backbreaker. Back to Tensai for two off a backsplash but he misses a second one, allowing Gabriel to get a quick rollup for the elimination.

Titus comes in to stomp on the spent Gabriel before it's back to Epico for a chinlock. Epico misses some elbow drops, allowing Gabriel to make

the tag off to Tyson. Kidd heads to the apron but gets sent to the floor where Primo gets in a cheap shot. Back inside with Primo now legal but getting forearmed in the face. Cole says Primo has been a general out there. I'd go more like a lieutenant at best from what I've seen.

Back to Titus who crotches himself off a missed big boot, allowing Tyson to kick him in the side of the head, setting up a rolling cradle for the pin and an elimination. Young comes in to keep the pressure on Kidd before it's back to Epico for some rolling belly to back suplexes. Not that they matter though as Kidd sweeps the legs and puts on the Sharpshooter to get rid of Epico. Cole of course talks about Montreal.

Primo comes in now but gets elbowed in the ribs for his efforts. He comes back with a quick belly to back suplex, only to go up top and dive into a dropkick to the ribs. The hot tag brings in Mysterio who rolls through a sunset flip and kicks Primo in the face for two. A seated senton looks to set up the 619 but Primo moves to the side, only to get caught in La Majistral for the pin. Darren Young is left all alone and it's finishers a go-go until Rey finishes him with a top rope splash for the win.

Rating: C. The winners were never really in doubt but this was the right way to get a show going. The fast paced stuff worked very well here with all of the smaller guys hitting their dives to wake the crowd up and give them a fun match. It's no masterpiece or anything but it did exactly what it was supposed to do. A little trivia for you: that loss makes Tensai 0-5 at Survivor Series, which I'm pretty sure is the worst record ever.

Maybe things will be better in 2013. From Smackdown on March 1.

HELL NO vs. Prime Time Players

Non-title, Kane is blindfolded and Bryan has an arm tied behind his back. After a break, Kane puts a hood on over his mask but it has a goat face on it. Funny stuff. Bryan has Kane start with Young so Darren has some fun. He tries to trip Kane up in a school boy but the masked man catches on. Darren: "IT DIDN'T WORK TITUS!" Kane catches up to Darren and slams him down before Bryan tags himself in. After some kicks to the chest, a one arm crucifix gets two on Young. It's off to Titus and we take a break.

Back with Daniel escaping from Titus and bringing in Kane. The fans help Kane find Titus in the corner and there's a hip toss by Kane, but he can't find Titus again. Young comes in off a tag and walks into a chokeslam but Young rolls away from the cover. Bryan tags himself in but Kane grabs the referee by the throat. Bryan tries to call him off so Kane grabs Bryan with the other hand. Kane eventually feels the beard and lets Bryan go, but the distraction lets Titus roll Daniel up for the pin at 3:55 shown of 7:25.

Rating: D. I have no idea what the point of this was. Is it that Bryan and Kane fight a lot? That's fine I guess, but they did this same idea on Raw on Monday. It certainly wasn't to push the Players as the division has already died off again. It wasn't for comedy because other than the goat face hood, nothing on here was funny.

Back to the red show on May 13, 2013.

Tons of Funk vs. Prime Time Players

Tensai crushes Darren to start but gets kicked in the face by Titus. Cole talks about all the countries watching the show tonight so he doesn't have to talk about the match. Titus misses a running charge into the corner and it's off to Brodus to clean house. As Clay knocks Darren down, Titus rolls up Brodus for the pin at 1:38. Replays show that Darren hit Brodus in the throat with his hair pick to allow the pin.

Then a match against a power team on Raw, August 19, 2013.

Prime Time Players vs. Real Americans

Before the match, Colter goes into a rant about how evil foreigners at Disney Land are. Young starts with Cesaro and takes over with relative ease. Off to Titus who runs over Swagger before getting caught in Cesaro's gutwrench suplex. Back to Swagger who has less luck but Titus gets caught by some double teaming. The Americans take turns on Titus but Swagger charges into a spinebuster. Hot tag brings in Young vs. Cesaro with Darren taking over. Everything breaks down and the fireman's carry gutbuster (Gut Check) is good for the pin on Antonio at 4:50.

Rating: D. The match was nothing of note but if it's Young's push for coming out of the closet I can't complain all that much. The Players have been hanging around the tag team scene for months now so it's not like this is a huge jump up the card for them. They would likely work better as faces anyway.

The Players had another title shot at Night of Champions 2013.

Tag Titles: Prime Time Players vs. Shield

It's Rollins/Reigns defending as the Players won tag team turmoil on the pre-show. Rollins and Titus start in a nice power vs. speed matchup. Seth can't throw Titus around and has his cross body caught, only for O'Neil to throw him down like it's nothing. Off to Young with a headlock on the mat followed by some shoulder blocks and a clothesline for two. Roman gets the tag and blocks an O'Connor Roll before being sent to the outside.

A big elbow gets two for Young and it's back to Titus to pound on Rollins some more. All Players so far as Titus blows the whistle, allowing Rollins to bail to the floor. Darren follows Seth to the floor, allowing Shield to take over as they come back inside. It's Reigns working over Darren before throwing him back to the outside.

Back in and Seth hooks a chinlock on Young before slapping him around a bit. Young comes back with a quick belly to belly but Reigns blocks the hot tag. Darren sends him into the corner and backdrops Seth down, allowing for the hot tag to Titus. O'Neil starts cleaning house and hits the release fall away slam on Rollins. Clash of the Titus gets two as Reigns makes the trademark Shield save. Young and Roman go to the floor but Reigns jumps back in for the spear on Titus, giving Seth the retaining pin at 7:30.

Rating: C. This was fine all things considered. The Players weren't going to get the belts and everyone knew it, but it's nice to see a fresh team in the title scene. It's not like those two getting a title shot is a stretch or anything so I can't imagine a ton of complaints about Young being pushed. Nothing special here but it was fine.

Another one off match from Smackdown, December 27, 2013.

Prime Time Players vs. Ryback/Curtis Axel

I refuse to refer to them as "Rybaxel." Ryback pounds on Young to start but Darren scores with a right hand to the jaw and a dropkick to the knee. Off to Titus for the front suplex to Darren onto Ryback for no cover. A hard shoulder puts Ryback down but Axel gets in a knee to O'Neil's back to take him down. Curtis chokes him in the corner ("BARK LIKE A DOG!") before it's quickly back to Ryback for a front facelock.

The heels take turns on O'Neil in the corner with Axel slapping him in the back of the head, only to run into a big boot. Darren gets the tag and scores with an overhead belly to belly on Axel before getting two off a northern lights suplex. Everything breaks down and Ryback is clotheslined to the floor, allowing Young to pin Axel at 4:51.

Rating: D+. The underlying problems with the tag division continues: it doesn't matter if you build up teams if the teams are boring and keep trading meaningless wins with no advancement in sight. This match doesn't change anything for either team and doesn't move the Players up towards a title program, at least not anytime soon.

Young had another singles match on Valentine's Day's Smackdown in 2014.

Darren Young vs. Damien Sandow

Titus O'Neil is on commentary. Young catches Sandow in a quick atomic drop and clotheslines him out to the floor. Back in and Damien gets a knee to Darren's ribs but You're Welcome is countered into a rollup for the pin by Young at 1:07. So much for rebuilding Sandow.

The Players had split by this time so here's their showdown at Elimination Chamber 2014.

Darren Young vs. Titus O'Neil

Basic story here of a team losing and splitting due to a heel turn by Titus. Darren gets in Titus' face to start but is knocked down by a hard forearm. The fans want Lesnar as Titus works on a headlock. Titus bails

to the floor and Darren is right on his heels as the fans chant Fruity Pebbles. Darren charges into the corner but gets backdropped out to the floor followed by having his back rammed into the post.

Back in and it's time for a bearhug, backbreakers and an abdominal stretch. Titus slaps Darren in the ribs before charging into a boot as the announcers talk about JBL being cheap. Darren comes back with some basic offense for two as the fans boo the kickout. Thankfully they get the hint and a quick Clash of the Titus ends Darren at 6:17.

Rating: D. This was about what I was expecting and it showed the problem with Young. He's basically the modern day Scotty Riggs, meaning a guy who was in a tag team with a much more charismatic guy and then had nothing interesting once he was on his own. Titus looked good here though and won clean in the right ending. Thankfully they went home quickly like they did.

Like I said earlier, there's just nothing interesting about Young's in ring abilities. He's adequate enough in the ring but that doesn't mean he's someone I want to see. His charisma is just ok, his look is just ok, and his abilities are just ok. To put it simply, he's totally average and that's not really a good thing.

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