

Gary Mehaffy talks about the draft

First of all, let me say that I'm glad to be back home! I was away for the last week or so with a group of 24 eleven year olds at an outdoor pursuits centre – all while having torn cartilage in my own hip! Ah, the joys!

But now that I'm back, I can carry on where I left off two weeks ago (how time flies when you're having fun!)

For those of you reading for the first time, or who are still getting used to the new site (the two best in the industry on the one site? How can the fan lose out?), I will be looking at a regular basis on underutilised/appreciated/pushed talent in the WWE.

Just for the record, I am starting to write this BEFORE the draft takes place, so my thinking may shift in the next few weeks about where I was headed.

But back to the main point. Two weeks ago I left a name dangling that I promised I would come back to as one of the first that I would look at. It was none other than current ECW Superstar, and SmackDown tag team champion, The Miz.

Yes, you read that right. The Miz.

Let me explain.

Back in the day when Tough Enough was a VERY credible show, a young man called Mike Mizanin was one of the entrants. This series was memorable for a few things. The future Boogeyman, Marty Wright, being thrown off the show for lying about his age (by 10 years! Come on Marty, like they wouldn't find out!); Daniel Puder just stopping short of fully humiliating Kurt Angle of SmackDown (if you missed it, believe me, it was on of THE moments of the last few years); and Mike ‘Miz’ Mizanin trying to make himself stand out from the pack by trying to adopt a heel persona.

And to a degree, he managed it.

He made it to the final two, was pummelled (in the humble scribes opinion) by Puder in the final contest between the two (a boxing match at Armageddon, December 12th, 2004) and generally stood no chance of winning the Tough Enough competition (again, in my opinion).

The next time we saw him on SmackDown, he was playing a face; this time as ‘host’ of the show, interacting with the crowd, a la MTV’s Spring break. Saddling him with the lamest catchphrase (hoo-rah) he was unceremoniously despised by the masses, even more so when he ventured into the ring.

Boy did he suck. He had heat, but it was X-Pac heat rather than Vickie Guerrero heat.

Then, a transformation occurred. Somewhere along the line, he turned heel, albeit looking like the illegitimate offspring of the Red Rooster. Right from the get go, I thought he had a chance as a heel. He had a swagger that suited a heel, and could talk a good game.

So far, so good.

A lot of people still didn't buy it. True, he still wasn't Ric Flair in the ring. Hey, he wasn't even David Flair. But it was obvious that he was trying.

Then, something really strange happened. I remember reading online (I would say it was one of Dan Wahler's, columns, and I will apologise now if it wasn't! It was definitely one of the regular contributors to the site) and agreeing that he would do well to be switched to ECW as a heel in a young, fresh group. There, he could have the rough edges worked off him and continue to develop as a performer. I agreed wholeheartedly, and a little while later it happened.

And since then, it's been one development after another.

He is much more accomplished in the ring. He still isn't Ric Flair, and isn't anywhere nearly as polished as his tag team partner John Morrison. But he's getting there.

He is using his naturally unlikeable persona to greater effect, riling up the masses for the right reasons. I witnessed this a

few months ago, and was informed by Thayne Jackman that at the house show he attended a couple of weeks ago he was riling the masses up masterfully.

And he, along with Morrison, has 'The dirt sheet' on wwe.com, which is showcasing their combined talents in other ways.

Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not saying the fans are ready for him to run out at the end of a TV taping and attack its main star (Lance Cade anyone?) And I'm not even certain that he is polished enough to be a singles wrestler. But there is certainly enough there that if he continues to ply his trade, learn and develop his character that there isn't a reason that he shouldn't move significantly higher up the card. And on that day, I can say 'I told you so'.

(For those of you keeping score, this part is being written a day or two after the draft and subsequent supplemental draft have taken place.)

Now, just a few short thoughts on a couple of other wrestlers who are overlooked for a number of reasons:

Shelton Benjamin – he can't do any worse on Smackdown than he has anywhere else. I really like him (his in ring abilities are second to none) but he's never really gotten the singles push his talent deserves, which is both the office's fault and his.

London/Kendrick – and no, I'm not saying this as an ROH mark (which I'm not. I like it, but don't see it enough to be classified as it!) The problem is now that they've been split up, which I don't think bodes well for either of them. They do have personality, just not of as high a standard as their aerials.

Hacksaw Jim Duggan – just kidding!

Cryme Tyme – yes, you read that right. Though I'll get back to them in a future column.

Next time, I'm going to look at someone that I really do think could help in a lot of ways, although he has to keep putting the hard yards in himself as well – Santino Marella.

If you want to email me to agree, disagree or flat out criticise me, feel free to contact me – garymehaffy@hotmail.co.uk

Til then, I'll see you around!

Gary Mehaffy

{plug}