



PAIGE

TOMORROW COMES TODAY

The youngest Divas Champion in history has made an immediate impact on the locker room, but to the WWE Universe, she remains very much a mystery. While her future is bright, it's Paige's past that's led her on a path to WWE. In her first *WWE Magazine* interview, the 21-year-old reveals what she's grown to love about America, how hard it is to wrestle in Dr. Martens, and why she's saving her scream for special occasions.

By JOHN MIHALY Photography By JASON TANAKA BLANEY



Who was the first person you called to tell that you just became the youngest Divas Champ in history?

Well, obviously the first people that I called were my family, and they were actually watching—and they saw it because they always stay up and watch Raw just in case. It was 5 a.m. in Norwich. My mom, dad, brothers and sisters were all watching and went crazy. After all the media and interviews, I waited until the show was completely done, and that's when I called them.

What does it mean to be "The Diva of Tomorrow"? How much pressure does that put on you? Has that moniker ruffled some feathers in the locker room?

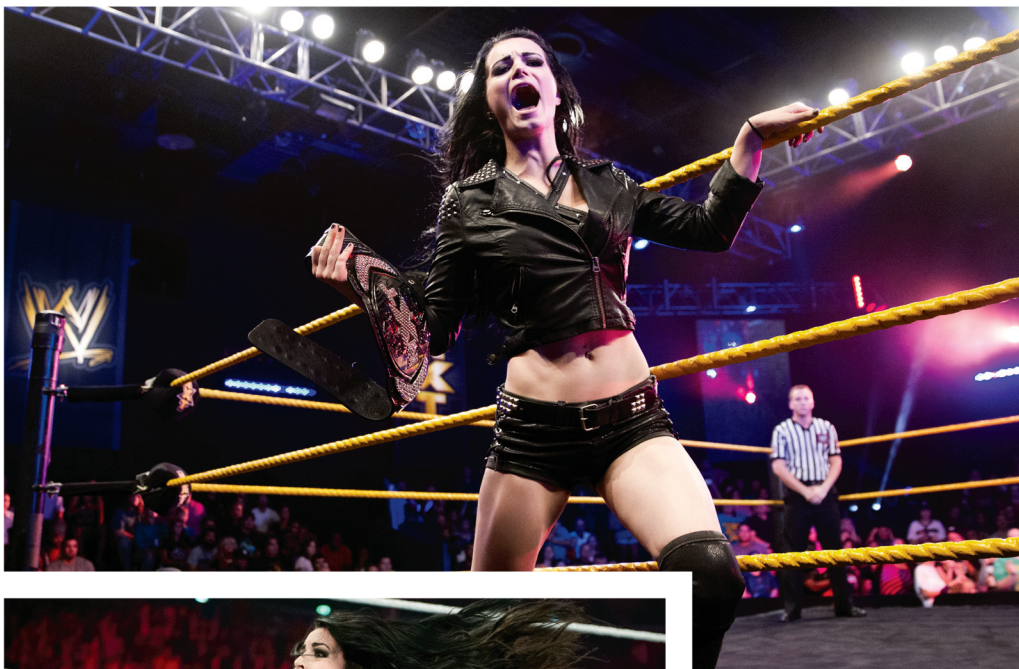
Any new Diva is going to ruffle feathers no matter what. There are a ton of feathers in the locker room. I'm the champion now; I came in on my first day and won it. I'm always going to have a target on my back when it comes to the girls. I'm new here, and they don't really know me that well yet. They've underestimated me a lot, but we'll see how it goes.

Is the crown heavy? Do you feel the weight of the Divas Title now that it's around your waist? And how does that compare to carrying the NXT Women's Title?

There is a big difference just because of the weight and the size! You made AJ wear this thing around? She's tiny! I actually wear it around my shoulder, which is good because I don't have to embarrass myself if I drop it.

Historically, which Divas Title run did you most admire?

There are tons. However, I really appreciate Beth Phoenix's. As long as they can carry it well, I like it. I'm really into the old-school girls because they seemed more competitive. But the girls are getting much more aggressive now, I think. Everyone has really



stepped up and are kicking some serious butt.

What moment growing up really turned you into the Paige we know today?

When I was around 17 or 18,

I came over to America with my mum. Her character is like the same as mine, so I would always be the jerky one when we were tagging here. When I got here, Dusty Rhodes said, "We like your character, we like

you and your look. We want you to be aggressive." So as soon as I got to NXT, I thought of my mom, and I thought, "She's crazy! I'm going to be just like her."

At any point when you were growing up, did you think this career was not for you?

I started wrestling when I was 13, so it was before that. I was always in wrestling and I was brought up in it. I would never see my family and then they'd come home. It would scare me. I could not do that. I would never do that. I was the only one in the family who said it scared them. One day, my dad told me that a girl didn't show up to the show and asked if I could join in. I already knew some of the wrestling moves, so I said sure. Then you just get hit. They tricked me. I love it, though. It's my dream.

What do you miss most about being home in Norwich?

The only thing I really miss is my family. I'm very at home here, though. I miss my friends, but it's mostly my family. Every year, it seems like a new niece or nephew is born. Then I have to meet

them every time I go home. I miss them incredibly.

Have you found anything in America that reminds you of the comforts of home?

Going into the ethnic section in Publix! If I get my Yorkshire tea bags, I feel at home. I like my Yorkshire pudding. I like my biscuits. I also have to have certain tea bags, but they have those now, so that makes me happy. The chocolate over here is terrible. Sorry! But America has turned me into a coffee girl.

What is your favorite thing about living in the United States so far?

Your fast food is so much better. I like a lot of things about America. The only thing I don't like is the humidity. That's the only little issue that I have. [Laughs.] Oh, and your bugs are worse, I never saw a cockroach until I came here. We have normal ones like ants and spiders. We're pretty wimpy when it comes to bugs.

Florida vs. Norwich?

The weather is a little bit different. I love Norwich, there's old buildings and it's got so much character and stuff like that. Florida is huge, and it's very hot. I have really good friends here now. I steered away from beaches because I'm so pale, but I love the beaches in Florida.

Speaking of your complexion, has Sheamus given you any tips on proper skin care and sunburn prevention?

When I first got here in NXT, he did. He told me that I had to get sunscreen, but I actu-

RUSEV Hottest Foreign Policy

→ Since making his debut in the 2014 Royal Rumble Match, Rusev has crushed opponents at an alarming rate. And with Lana by his side at all times—letting him know precisely when to do the crushing—The Bulgarian Brute seems nigh-unstoppable. As summer rolls on, so does Rusev. Who—if anyone—can stop WWE's most dominant import?



ally tan OK. He has to cover up because he can burn real quick. That happened to me once. He'll tell me all the time, "Cover up, pasty."

You have very interesting in-ring gear, but how do you wrestle in Dr. Martens?

Everyone asks me that. I'm used to it, though. You have to break them in so I had to wear them on the streets. They're very good, very British. I'm sticking to my guns. I'm really happy they're back in fashion again because I love them and I own a pair, so I might as well put these babies on.

Stylistically, what are the major differences between wrestling here in the United States versus wrestling in the

United Kingdom? Would we be able easily follow a match?

We have different rules than you do. There are also different match concepts. We can have rounds and public warnings. So public warnings are basically, you get two. If you get a third one, you're disqualified. So if you get caught cheating, they give you your first public warning and tell you not to do it again. As for rounds, say you have five rounds and they're six minutes each. That's how we do it in England. We have long matches, but breaks in between.

Who are some UK wrestlers that you liked watching?

Well, old school, I really liked Johnny Saint, Brian Maxine, Danny Boy Collins, my dad Ricky Knight—he's actually one of my heroes—my brothers of course. And NXT trainer Robbie Brookside!

You're an excellent screamer. Where do you get that from, and does it take practice?

I can't scream high-pitched, it's very boyish. It happened randomly one day after I did

a move in the ring and it just became my thing. If I do it too much, like at WrestleMania Axxess, I lose my voice. So on the Monday after when I was doing a promo with AJ Lee, I was so scared because I lost my voice. It was the perfect day to lose my voice. I do it on special occasions now!

Did NXT make it easier to transition to the main roster?

Oh my gosh, NXT is incredible. Before the Performance Center, we didn't have our promo room and we didn't have to do commentary, but the Performance Center has everything. Now we are mentally and physically prepared for it. NXT is incredible. Joining the WWE roster is going to be scary either way—it doesn't matter how much training you've had—but once you're up here, you can know that you can throw anything at me and I can do it. NXT helped me and everyone else so much.

Finally, what is Paige's most unexpected locker room story so far?

I didn't think everyone was going to be as nice as they were, but everyone has been amazing. I'd say the road trip where I got Summer Rae into Screamo music. She knows all the words now. She's like a proper punk girl now even though she's my complete opposite. I listen to a lot of music. My mom got me into the '80s bands. So I'm really into Skid Row and stuff like that. My mum is a proper punk rocker. She's got red hair, piercings and tattoos—a badass. Nowadays, I listen to what the kids listen to, so Stick to Your Guns, Bring Me the Horizon, A Day to Remember, In This Moment. I'm into everything, so those are my go-tos. I listen to Adele, though, too—depends on how I'm feeling. If I'm angry Paige, let's get the Screamo on. If I feel like a girl, I'll rock out to Adele now.

DAMIEN SANDOW



What was your best or worst summer job?

Sandow: My worst summer job was carrying around that albatross known as the Money in the Bank briefcase. I was also the moderator for the public library when I was 12; I was the youngest person in history to ever hold that title. I had to keep order and keep everyone silent.

STYLING BY SOFIA KARVELA FOR WWWAGENTOULVER.COM; PROP STYLING BY MARK DELPRA; HAIR BY HILLARY FENTON; MAKEUP BY JANET VENTRIGLIA