

Thirty years ago, a young man set foot on the Blackpool Pleasure Beach to begin a career that destiny had chosen for him in childhood. In that span of time, he's traveled the world over, and faced an encyclopedia's worth of opponents. He's cheated death and overcome some of life's most insurmountable obstacles. What he *hasn't* accomplished in his profession means little compared to what he's given—and continues to give.

He is a voracious student and a patient teacher; he is an in-ring technician and ever the comedian; he is a diabolical villain, and a true gentleman.

**He is William Regal.**

He is a wrestler, and this is what he has learned during his three decades in the business...



*"Wrestling Owes Me Nothing": A Lifetime in the Ring with William Regal*

BY JOHN MIHALY • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICH FREEDA







1. At 20 years of age, Regal was an in-ring veteran; 2. With Golden Boys tag team partner, Robby Brookside; 3. Regal assures us he's *not* falling in this photo; 4. There's something quite eerier about a Master Villain flashing the "peace sign," especially with that dour look on his face; 5. The Golden Boys taking it to yet another set of foes; 6. One of William Regal's all-time favorite photos—taking a classic back bodydrop; 7. Regal has faced opponents of every shape and size, but none larger perhaps than Giant Haystacks; 8. "Lord" Regal with his WCW Blue Bloods tag team partner, "Earl" Booby Eaton; 9. While the English and Irish have had their issues over the centuries, The Celtic Warrior, Sheamus, has always been considered a "William Regal Fellow"; 10. All that bridging has allowed Regal to extend his career and pass his knowledge onto third-generation Superstars; 11. Fighting CM Punk for the title of King Of The Ring.

#### On Paying Dues In Actual Blood, Sweat and Tears...

"There was a point when I was 17; I was put through a hard time getting into this job, and I don't look back on it like, 'Woe Is Me.' Absolutely not. You had to earn your spot in the wrestling business when I started because you were basically taking someone else's job. It made you have some character. It's hard to understand this, but we used to do 12 to 15 shows per week. I had the lunch knocked out of me where I used to leave the ring and go and find a hole I could crawl into and cry. I'd

be bleeding through my ears and my nose and my mouth every single day. I almost couldn't take it anymore. I was so beat up, I had pains shooting through both legs, and I was making no money. It was an odd life, and I got to the point where I didn't know if I could carry on. Then I had one match with a gentleman from Manchester named Ian Wilson who was a postman all his life and also wrestled. He was this wonderful old English villain. He made me look like a million dollars in the ring, and think there was light at the end of the tunnel. I remember that one match kept me in this business. It was the one point where I physically didn't know if I could keep going. I remember coughing up blood for weeks before that. I was just a little boy planning on being a wrestler. When I do look back now, though, it's ridiculous."

#### On Achieving Happiness In The Workplace...

"I think what's different about me than a lot of fellows is that I have no competitive spirit. I never played

any sports, let alone watched them. No interest in it at all. My life was wrestling and entertainment. I never competed with anybody. Maybe my career would have been better if I had been more that way. I'm not a politician, just the furthest thing possibly from that. It's just not my way: I am what I am, and luckily I've managed to get this far by just sticking to it, doing it and being around something that I've always loved to do. It makes me very proud watching Daniel Bryan. I can see that he's made it, and he's overcome a lot of odds. I never think about me that long. I don't know, I just don't really have a thought about that, I do what I do, and it is what it is. And I know it could all end tomorrow."

#### On Having The Most Interesting Passports...

"I had a full career before I even came to America when I was 24. I literally traveled the world and wrestled all the best people out there. Then I came here and started all over again. I had a helluva first few years here in

WCW. I wouldn't change anything about the time period I was in. Most of the guys going forward who are going to become big stars are only going to wrestle the same 20 guys in their entire careers. For somebody who's not a big star, you'd be hard-pressed to find someone who's wrestled a different array of people than I have. That was the thing I was known for. I used to go out of country like a lot of British wrestlers, because we could wrestle anybody and make them look like they were very good, whether they were or not. I wrestled Antonio Inoki. Who can say that from my age group? You can't. I don't care what anyone says, nobody has wrestled in more countries than I have—44 countries and islands, if you add them up. I hear some crazy numbers about what people have done. I know what I've done. Some of my passports are great. The opportunities this company has given me to travel are incredible. I haven't been to Russia or China, but if I never go anywhere again, I certainly can't complain."

*"Wrestling owes me nothing. I owe wrestling everything. Every bit of food that goes in my mouth, everything that goes to my children, I owe to this. Everything. I'm very fortunate."*

WILLIAM REGAL



#### On Staying In Shape...

"As much as I've had things go wrong or made things go wrong because of things that have been my own fault, I'm still in one piece. Obviously, I'm not a body guy, but I do the kind of physical training that keeps me injury free. ...There's only one routine I have, which is where I go through all of my joints and move them 10 ways in one ...and then 10 in another direction. There's one specific sequence that takes about 15 minutes; I don't feel right when I don't do it. I'm not superstitious really. I used to have a rabbit's foot, but it started off as an ingrown toenail. When you're in this job long enough, there's always something, a chronic problem, like your knee is bad. But then one day it'll be gone, but then the next day, your neck hurts. You just deal with it. There's never a perfect day, but you get on with it. I've been very fortunate to have 30 years of doing what I like to do. I love what I do, I love being around it, I love the whole concept of it—and I'm happy to be in it."

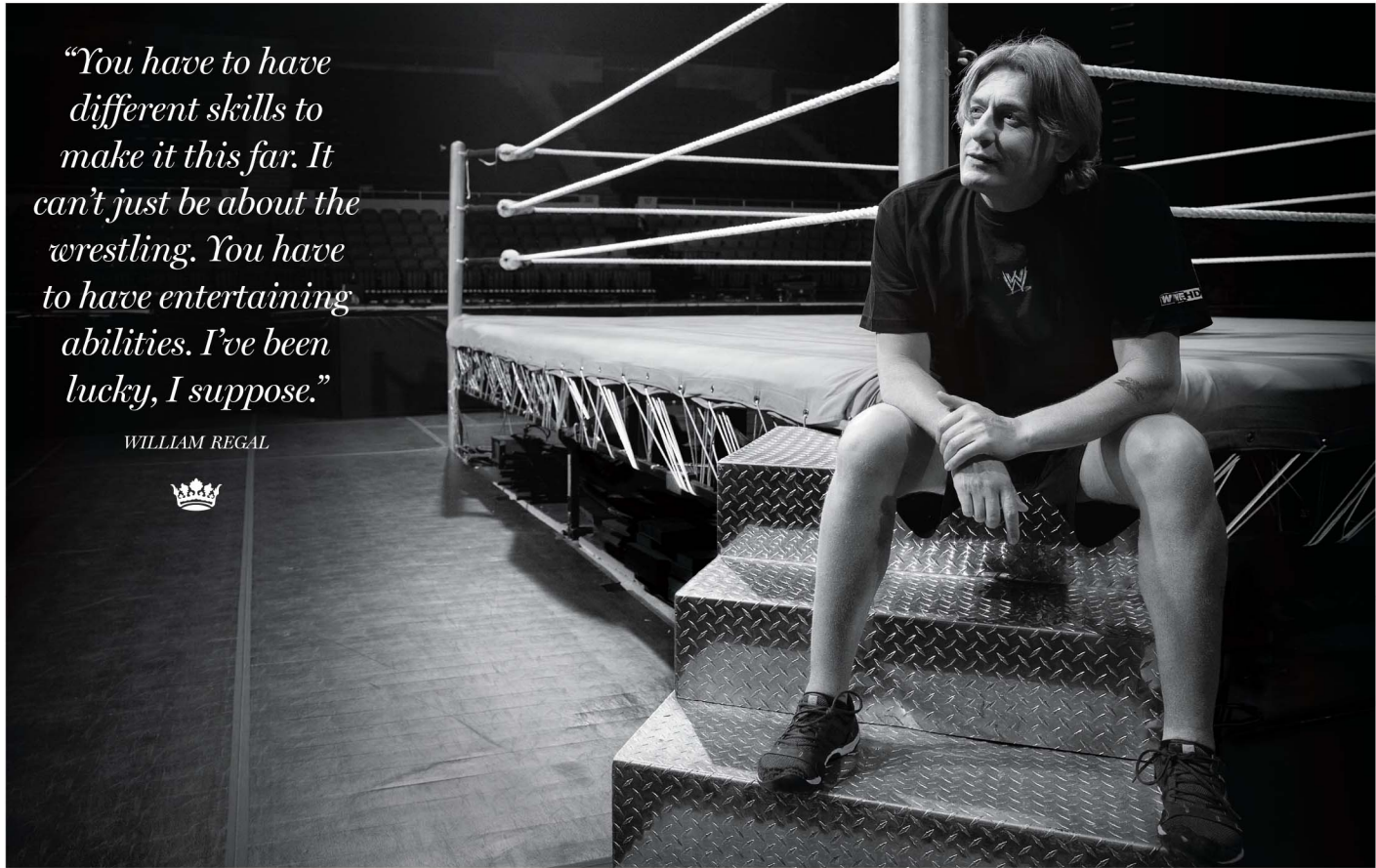
**O**n Picking Your Profession and Not Letting It Pick You...

"I started wrestling when I was 15. In England at that time, if you were a working-class person, you left high school when you were 16, and anything else was further education. If you were a working class kid, in those days, it was leave school, and go into an apprenticeship of a trade, or work in a factory or whatever industry the area you lived specialized in. I found they were all bricklayers [in my area]. I knew from my earliest memories that I wanted to be a wrestler, and I certainly was never going to be a bricklayer. I just knew I was made for different things. I felt that way from the beginning. Even as a child I knew I was going to be an entertainer. I always wanted to be a wrestler or a comedian or a clown, and I sort of got involved in all three, which is why I enjoy doing this. There wasn't even a question if I'd do something else."

#### On Figuring It All Out At An Early Age...

"When I was a kid, up until I was 10 years old, I didn't know what a good wrestler was. I knew what I thought was a good wrestler and they were the entertaining ones who pulled faces and made me scream and shout. When I got to 10, I started watching some incredibly skilled wrestlers, but it wasn't until I got to be about 15 when I started working in this business that I found out who was really good and who wasn't. It still didn't change my views. I've always understood that this isn't about who's the greatest wrestler. You know, we joke about who is the greatest, but it's got nothing to do with that. It's got to do with who the people want to come and see. *They're* the greatest. *They're* the ones who matter. The people like me who can do anything technically good, that's not of any use if the people don't want to pay to come and see you get involved in all three, which is why I enjoy doing this. There wasn't even a question if I'd do something else."





“You have to have different skills to make it this far. It can’t just be about the wrestling. You have to have entertaining abilities. I’ve been lucky, I suppose.”

WILLIAM REGAL



#### On Maintaining A Steady Diet...

“I’m forced to eat a certain way because I have all sorts of food allergies. I have no interest in eating, though. If I consume just a speck of gluten, I can swell up like a balloon. I literally put on 10-15 pounds overnight in fluid. You never know what other people are doing, like using the same utensil and causing cross contamination. A tiny pinch of flour that rubs against something I eat can be a real pain. No dairy, either. It’s a pain in the backside sometimes. You deal with what you have to deal with, and I’m certainly not complaining. It’s just what you have to deal with.”

#### On Knowing One’s Limitations...

“Over the years, I have never thought I wouldn’t be doing this. I’ve never questioned it. When you get looked in the eye by a top cardiologist and told you have to have a heart transplant, and never do anything again—never mind wrestle—it never once crossed my mind that I wouldn’t still be doing this. That’s what has kept me going all these years. I chose this

life and everything that comes with it. That was it: that didn’t change, and I never faulted. Nope. I’ve never thought about not doing this. It got to the point where, a few years ago, I knew I couldn’t keep wrestling full time the way I was. It’s probably too late now, but I could happily still do it. I know that I could go back to it. But it’s not in the plans for me, which I am totally fine with.”

#### On Thinking Long-Term...

“I used to be a long-term thinker. And it just never worked out for me, so I don’t worry about it anymore. You can just eat your mind up about ‘What ifs?’ and ‘I could’ve done this, I could’ve done that.’ Since 9/11, I haven’t looked at a newspaper or watched the news because it’s just less stress. I’m going to deal with what I have to deal with, and I’m going to look after the people I’ve got to look after. Otherwise it would drive me nuts. Some people think that’s incredibly selfish, and it probably is in a way. But it’s just what works for me to keep my head in the

### 30 YEARS WORTH OF BAD JOKES

*If the Regal Stretch Doesn’t Make You Tap Out, Then This One Might...*



There’s a duck who walks in a bar and he says, “Double whisky please.”

The barman says, “I can’t believe it, a talking duck. Where did you come from?”

The duck says, “The construction site across the road.”

The barman replies, “You should be in the circus.”

The duck says, “Why would the circus need a bricklayer?”

game. To be able to deal with what I’ve got to deal with.”

#### On The Future of The Business...

“NXT is something incredible and special. It’s just great to see the fellows get there and work hard and do everything that they’ve got to do. You get to see them flourish. When it gets down to brass tacks, the same people who are making it now, if they had been around in my generation, would have made it just the same. I’m not one of those guys that goes knocking everything and everybody says, ‘Back in my day...’ I can safely say at this point in my career that I’ve done as much, if not more, than anybody in this job. But there’s nothing I hate worse than all that nonsense. The ones who make it now; they earn it. They all earn their spots. They all work hard, they all create. They all have to be really good at this. You could coast through this a few years ago by just looking a certain way or genetics, but not anymore. You look in that ring now and these fellows can all go, and go as good as anyone.”



## William Regal Guys

*They’ve either trained with him or been trained by him, tagged with him or torn up the ring with him. But these Superstars all have on one thing in common...respect for a true Master Villain of wrestling.*

### TRIPLE H

**Tag Team Partner, WWE COO, 13-Time World Champion, The Game**

“I think William Regal’s passion for this business has allowed him to not only succeed but to change with the times. If you look at the things he’s done during his career, from contesting serious matches to making people laugh, that passion has allowed him to fill whatever role needed to be filled. Not a lot of people can do that. That’s a rare quality, to be able to do both...For me, *NXT* is my environment and what I deal with on a daily basis—William is a huge component of that. He’s got a remarkable eye for talent. The rare thing with him is that most guys see new talent in the mold that they are, and that’s what they are interested in. He has a unique ability to look at everything. It can be someone who works in the complete opposite style that he does, but he can still see value. To me, that’s where he plays a huge role—spotting and understanding talent, who can make it. As for his jokes, I never hear him, because he’s such a soft talker. We were on the road together for years, and I spent the majority of my time saying, ‘What?’ He has that English sense of humor; you know, in which the joke is so rotten it’s actually funny. It’s not that I’m laughing at the joke, but more at how bad the joke is.”

### DANIEL BRYAN

**World Heavyweight Champion, Beard-Growing Enthusiast, Student**

“One of the things that’s cool to me about William Regal is that he’s a gentleman. He is professional in every aspect of the word. He shows up to the building, and he’s wearing his suit and looks presentable. Also, he’s got that quiet toughness. Some guys are very brash and want to wear their Affliction shirts but he’s not that guy. You know he’s tough, but he never has to say anything about it. He’s somebody who came up in a different era. I was with WWE when I was 18 and then got let go in 2001, but he was responsible for getting me booked in the UK. And I spent six months there in 2003 and another four months in 2005 and another three months in 2008, and that’s all because of him. It’s hard to get feedback from good people when you’re on the independent circuit. A lot of those shows I was on, I was main-eventing and people were asking me for advice, but then who do I go to for advice? Regal was always there. Anytime I asked him to watch a match, he’d watch it. And then he’d give me feedback and constructive criticism. When I first got to WWE, he really helped me navigate the waters, as far as, what you should do and don’t need to do here and what’s important.”

### ROBBY BROOKSIDE

**32-year British Wrestling Veteran, Former Tag Team Partner, Trainer of Daniel Bryan, Sheamus & Wade Barrett**

“He’s almost like a big brother and I’m two years older than him. He’s always told me if you want something you have to go out and get it; you can’t rely on other people. He was serious about wrestling but not in an arrogant way but in an ambitious way. I came in about 1980 and the only thing you could find out about anything across the Atlantic was getting a hold of *Ring* magazine. When he was starting out, he was actually more of an Americanized kind of wrestler from Great Britain. I come from the more technical side. As a tag team, The Golden Boys, that’s when the fireworks really started for us. He was the big lad, and I was the sort of wiry character, and we really complemented each other. He’s the same person in every aspect really, from his musical tastes to his pets. He came in a couple years after me and from the world go he wanted to go to America. Recently when WWE was in the UK we spent about four days together and we went up to Blackpool to reminisce. Every time I see him, it’s as if it’s Monday and six years later it’s Tuesday. I had a lot of heroes growing up in this business but to me he’s my hero.”

### ANTONIO CESARO

**United States Champion, Linguist, European, Man**

“He helped me get here. I had only met him a couple of times, but when I decided to come here, he helped me out and he looked out for me...and still does. I think the great thing about him is that he cares about wrestling and he cares about young guys who try and learn it the hard way. He appreciates that. Every week you see him talk to some young up and coming guys that come here and try to try out for WWE. He takes hours and hours out of his day to talk to them, just to try to make them better and try to help them. If he just feels that one of out of those hundreds of guys he can help, he’ll do it. That’s what you need, in my opinion. I think he’d like to be remembered as a tremendous teacher, and he’s helped so many people. Yes, you know, we have a similar sense of humor since we’re obviously from Europe. All the European guys kind of bond together. So we always have a laugh, and it’s great because you know it’s a different generation, but it’s all a love for wrestling and for this business. We’ve only contested one match... and I whooped his ass. Yeah, we wrestled on the last European tour for the first time, and it was quite great because it was in my hometown, and I beat him, too.”

### WADE BARRETT

**Intercontinental Champion, Bare-Knuckle Fighter, Bloke**

“To be honest, I think there are two sides to my relationship with William Regal. On the one side, I was always a fan watching him, before I even became a wrestler. William Regal is from Blackpool, which is very close to Preston, where I’m from. So that was definitely an inspiration for me. And then the other side of it is that he’s always been very supportive of me. He’s given me advice, been a close friend. I definitely have that kind of connection with him. I mean if you look at the kind of things that myself and Regal are interested in, all the music, we’re into the same kind of bands. We both like the same kind of comedy shows. He’s definitely somebody I’ve turned to for help and to try and guide my career. He’s been very forthcoming with that from day one. The best piece of advice he’s ever given me I remember when I was competing on *NXT*. I asked him a question about how he was able to go from wearing the dress one week to a week later being the meanest, baddest guy on the show. And he said, ‘You just have to take things one day at a time. Whatever you’re getting from WWE, you just have to make it work.’ And that’s what he’s always done.”

### FIT FINLAY

**Belfast Bruiser, United States Champion, Trainer, Shillelagh Collector**

“Well, you know, there’s always that English/Irish disconnection, if you want to put it that way. We might usually disagree on who the better one is. I do have a few more years on him. He does have a couple of badges that were handed out to him. He’s got scars, and he still has a cauliflower ear that I presented him with a long time ago. You often get a lot of people who have come through the business and they’ve done all the miles on the road and been looked after and trained by others but some of them get sour and walk away and they don’t give back. Regal is still here. He still gets in the ring, still trains guys. He tries to help them all out and give them advice. To give back is just the right thing to do and he’s doing well. Everybody will benefit by having Regal around. There’s not many of him left. He’s well schooled and he’s passing it on, which is a great, admirable thing. He’s correct in saying wrestling doesn’t owe any of us anything. But it has afforded us a lot of luxuries as well as a lot of heartaches. It’s been a life journey, and life isn’t always a bed of roses. That is something that has to be said for anybody that has spent that length of time, and then wants to pass it on to others.”