

Figure Four Weekly #1019, January 3, 2015: Christian retires, WWE kills stipulations

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Christian officially retires

By David Bixenspan (davidbix)

It was made official this past Monday on Raw that thanks to a string of injuries culminating in two concussions in six months, Jay "Christian" Ryan has retired as a professional professional wrestler. After a two decade career, his retirement was, strangely, induced by being refused to pass a physical, someone else's angle in the opening segment on Raw.

I was already going to write about this when I decided to look back at something I wrote at Monday Night when he suffered a concussion in March. It reinforced my memory that his last match was a four-way for an International Title that came to be between him, Chris Ziegler, and Sheamus, which was the show where I was sent to interview the Magnificent and WWE at the moment's major angle. I saw Christian's last match live from outside.

(And of the four guys in the match, Christian is retired, Del Rio was fired, Sheamus is drafted indefinitely, and only Ziegler is still around. Hah.)

It's a sad, farcical, uneventful end to the career of an incredibly talented guy who never really got the recognition he deserved. I don't think he was ever anything close to a half worker at his time in WWE, and he may have even been great for a lot of that time. But for whatever reason, it didn't completely click until he returned to WWE in 2009 after his TNA run. Maybe it was confidence from having worked at a hotel here in TNA, but from the moment he started back up he was performing at an incredibly high level, he inspired me to do better in the ring.

It was sort of like a modern version of William Regal as WWE Television Champion, as he had to have long showcase TV main event matches with opponents ranging from guys like Brock Lesnar, Jack Swagger, United States, and Zack Ryder to fellow veterans like Finlay, William Regal, and even Tereza Platanova. During this run, he established that when it comes to putting together a hot finishing sequence, he was right up there with guys like CM Punk and Daniel Bryan as the best in WWE.

Christian with a career PPV: Mike Lane

It's mostly forgotten now that when he made his return on ECW on Syfy without any advanced hype, it was considered something of an underdog moment that he returned in such a seemingly low profile way. Rightly or wrongly, the assumption had been that he was the wrestler who had been attempting to murder Jeff Hardy over and over, only that Matt Hardy in fact got into with Christian replacing him as the current champion anchoring ECW. He made the absolute most of that run, though, and with how the Hardy angle went (that taking credit for the real life fire that killed Jeff's dog and destroyed his trailer), it was probably for the best that he didn't get that spot.

The biggest run of his career came about in somewhat unorthodox fashions, so when his best friend Edge retired, he got a few world title reigns and a main event main that included a severely injured heel run. He made the most out of it, though, with a series of outstanding matches against Randy Orton. When he was healthy, Christian was a big part of the opening in WWE PPV quality in the last few years (and his absence certainly didn't help the quality of the TV either), to the point that his match with Alberto Del Rio at SummerSlam in 2013 would've been the best match on the card (parity of PPV in WWE history, but it wasn't that night because they happened to be working underhanded CM Punk vs. Brock Lesnar and John Cena vs. Daniel Bryan).

That's when he was healthy, though. At the time of the concussion that ended his career in March, he was back the just two months after a five month stint on the shelf recovering from

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