

December 16, 2010

WWE success came quickly for 10-year veteran Alberto Del Rio

Wrestled around the world as Dos Caras Jr.

By [MATT BISHOP](#) - SLAM! Wrestling

You wouldn't know it from watching him during his first four months on WWE television, but Alberto Del Rio has had to nearly reinvent his style from the days when he worked around the world as Dos Caras Jr.

Gone is the trademark mask, the family legacy and name that meant so much abroad and the style he's so used to wrestling. Born out of that is the character of a Mexican aristocrat, one with millions of dollars, houses upon houses and garages filled with only the most prestigious and expensive automobiles.

The son of the legendary luchador Dos Caras and the nephew of Mil Mascaras, wrestling has been in Del Rio's blood for generations.

Now, he has left years of tradition behind to make a name for himself in the United States with WWE.

Making the transition

Despite the confident appearance he gives on WWE television, the transformation from luchador Dos Caras Jr. to WWE superstar Alberto Del Rio certainly hasn't been as easy as he's made it look.

"I'm going to be totally honest with you, it was really hard," he told SLAM! Wrestling on Thursday.

When Del Rio signed with WWE in 2009 and was sent to the company's developmental territory, Florida Championship Wrestling, it was a learning experience for the ring veteran, who not only had to learn a different style of wrestling, but had to work without a mask for the first time in his career. Even in his mixed martial arts bouts he fought with the mask on.

"I feel great now, but at the beginning it was really difficult because I had wrestled with that mask for over 10 years everywhere, Mexico, Japan, Europe and at the beginning it was hard because you're not used to selling your expressions," Del Rio said. "But I was there in FCW with guys like [Norman \(Smiley\)](#), Dr. Tom Pritchard, with [Dusty Rhodes](#), and they helped me a lot. They helped me all the way. I think there's a reason I'm doing such a good job here in WWE."

It wasn't only losing the mask that made things different for Del Rio. There is a fundamental difference in how wrestling is done between the United States and Mexico, one that required a big change for 10-year veteran of the sport.

"In Mexico, we wrestle on the right side," Del Rio said. "Here in America, we do it on the left side. That was the hardest part. Then how to work for the cameras, for TV, sell my expressions, all those things were really difficult at the beginning, but at this moment I feel really comfortable and I think, well, I don't think, I'm sure I'm doing a great job."



Alberto Del Rio heads to the ring. © 2010 World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc.

Even though Del Rio has had to make the transition from lucha wrestler to WWE superstar, he, like many wrestling greats of the past, had the opportunity to learn other styles and go through the rigors of working around the world before coming to WWE.

Stars like [Chris Jericho](#) and [Lance Storm](#) have credited working around the world as one of the reasons they went on to have success in the United States. Del Rio certainly seems on his way to becoming another one of those success stories.

"I think I have everything because I have the three strong styles in the world," he said. "I have the American style, the Mexican style and the Japanese style. The fusion of all those styles are making me what I am right now. Plus, the combination of the lucha libre style with the WWE style is paying off. Plus, I've got the strength, I've got the size and especially I've got the experience. I'm not one of those guys without experience. I've been doing this for years and years and I can face anyone."



Dos Caras Jr., Pride FC MMA fighter.

A big character

Del Rio has one of the more dynamic characters in WWE with a top-notch presentation. He rides into the arena in a luxury automobile, he has his own personal ring announcer and gets a pyro shower behind him during his entrance.

His in-ring character is a cocky and endlessly arrogant. A ruthless competitor who will take any shortcut to gain an advantage. One who isn't afraid to take another superstar out if he has to.

Crafting the Alberto Del Rio persona has been an interesting study. Like many successful characters in wrestling, Del Rio has used personal experiences to fuel his portrayal.

"To develop my character, I only used experiences from people I hate," he said, laughing. "That's making my job really easy. All your life, you have the chance to know people where you hate the way they talk, the way they walk, the way they express themselves and that's what I do to develop my character. I just remember people I hate through the years and that's Alberto Del Rio right there."

He said prior to being put on television, he had a conversation with WWE Chairman [Vince McMahon](#) about his character that ended up really connecting with him.

"Before my debut, Mr. McMahon told me, 'You gotta believe to make people believe,'" Del Rio said. "When he told me that, I was like, 'OK, all that I need is to believe my character and that way, everyone in the crowd will believe in this character.' That's what I do every time I go out, I really believe I'm Alberto Del Rio. I really believe I have all those cars, all those millions."

Right now, he's playing the gimmick. One day, he wants to live it.

"I hope someday I have all those millions and all those cars," he said, laughing.

A family tradition

Like several others in WWE, Del Rio himself is a third generation superstar. His father, though, spent his career plying his trade in Mexico while his uncle Mil Mascaras branched out much like Del Rio, wrestling around the world.

"My grandpa was a wrestler. He never was a real famous wrestler, but he's the one who started this tradition in my family," Del Rio said. "Then my father, my uncles, my cousins and now me, it's in our blood. Since I was a little kid, I was always with my father in the gym, training."

Although he isn't the first family member to wrestle for the McMahon family (Mascaras had a run in the 1970s in the WWWF), he is the first member of his family to wrestle as a heel, and he said he loves it.



Alberto Del Rio, direct descendant of The Fonz? © 2010 World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc.

"All my family members are babyfaces and I was a babyface in Mexico," Del Rio said. "I'm enjoying being a heel so much, I'm having so much fun that I don't want to be a babyface ever again in my life.

"Being a heel, you have the chance to interact with the people, to make them cry, laugh. To interact with the people, to make them cry and laugh, you make them hate you and that's a lot of power in your hands. That's what I'm enjoying the most."

Even though he has a big match coming up this Sunday at the "WWE TLC: Tables, Ladders, Chairs" pay-per-view, one of Del Rio's most special moments in his short time in WWE was the company's tour of Mexico in October. On that tour, his father came along for the ride, cornering Del Rio and also participating as a special guest referee.

Del Rio said he doesn't know how he's going to be able to repay the company for creating that special moment for his father and family.

"For a week, they made my dad feel like a superstar again," Del Rio said. "My father is one of those guys who really loves the business, who misses the business, who misses the road. The fact that the company invited him to do that tour in Mexico, that was something incredible. For me, imagine this, my father, my teacher, my friend, he was next to me, in the corner while I was facing Rey and the Undertaker in front of my own people from Mexico. That was a really incredible experience."

Achieving success

After spending time in FCW, Del Rio was brought on the road, working dark matches and house shows for several months before vignettes began playing on Smackdown touting his impending debut.



Dos Caras Sr.

Del Rio, though, said he was patient throughout the entire process, from starting on the road in April to his television debut in late August.

"I understand that WWE, it's like the NFL or NBA of wrestling, so if you really want to be here, you have to go through all those steps to go to the top," he said. "I knew that the company knew I am a wrestler with experience. They have to try me. They wanted to see if I'm going to be able to handle the pressure and that's the reason they put me in all those dark matches and all those house shows before they put me on TV. I was OK because all the time I knew at some point I'm going to be where I am right now."

Despite his family's rich history in Mexico, Del Rio said he's always wanted to come to America and work for WWE. He said he thinks every wrestler, no matter what their original origin, wants to be in WWE.

"It's like an actor doing soap operas in Mexico, they're fine, they're comfortable there, but they want to be in Hollywood," Del Rio said. "It's the same for us, for entertainers, you work in countries like Mexico, there's a lot of companies down there, but at the end, my dream was always to be here, in this company, because it's the biggest company in the world."

Wrestling for the biggest company in the world has both its benefits and downfalls. He gets the greatest exposure on a worldwide level, but there's also more competition for the top spots in the company.

When he participates in his first non-team pay-per-view match Sunday, he has confidence that it's just the beginning.

"I think I'm going to be heavyweight champion in this company very soon," he said. "In two years, I think I'm going to be one of the main guys in this company, one of the top five guys in this company. That's the reason I came here, that's the reason I left everything behind -- my friends, my family, my house in Mexico, my status. I was a big superstar in Mexico and when I came to WWE, no one knew me. Now I'm building my career here in the States, little by little and I'm sure I'm going to be one of the main guys pretty soon."

RELATED LINKS

- [Alberto Del Rio bio and story archive](#)

Matt Bishop can be reached at bishop20@msu.edu. Please include your name and hometown. [Click here](#) to follow Matt on Twitter. Should be a good one!.