

# OVERCOMING THE ODDS

| By PHIL AUSTIN - PHILUK1@aol.com |

**S**hannon Rose is a man who has done it all. He may not be the most recognisable name in professional wrestling but, whether its ring announcing, refereeing, winning IPW battle royales or hosting his own star-studded television shows, Shannon Rose has worked with some of the biggest names in the industry. From Ric Flair to the Rock, Shannon Rose has worked with them all. But it could have all been so different. The Wrestling Press sat down with Shannon to look at how he overcome a crippling disease in order to achieve his goals and live his dreams.

**> Wrestling Press:** Tell us a bit about your background in the wrestling business. How did you get into ring announcing, interviewing etc. What roles have you had within the business, and how did you get each of these roles?

I started in pro wrestling at the age of 12. I had a serious illness called Ehlers Danlos that is a neuromuscular condition.

I was very ill at that time in my life and the Make-A-Wish foundation granted me a wish to meet Hulk Hogan. From there Dusty Rhodes and Gordon Solie saw something special in me and gave me a chance to write for Florida Championship Wrestling.

I remember interviewing such stars as Bret Sawyer, Nasty Boys, DDP, Kevin Sullivan and others. It was quite a thrill being someone so young and hanging out with the stars of today and tomorrow.

I then started attending small "outlaw" shows as they were known at the time.

The main event of one show was Mike Awesome vs. Luis Astea. I was given the chance to ring the bell a few shows before that. The ring announcer did not show up and at age 14 I was asked to fill that role. I was wide-eyed thinking to myself "I have never done this before, what do I do?"

With both arms in a sling I stepped into the squared circle and the rest is history.



A young Shannon with Ric Flair

**> Wrestling Press:** What was the story behind your public access show, and what are some of the memorable moments on it?

At age 14, Steve Keirn and others thought I had a lot of skills and knowledge of the wrestling business behind me, so suggested starting my own LIVE TV Show.

We did that show for 8 years.

I had known the Johnson and Maivia Family for many years from interviewing Rocky and becoming friends with Leah Maivia over the years. Rocky Johnson came up to me and said "I want you to have my kid on the show". This was a young Dwayne Johnson, who had just started playing for the Miami Hurricanes. I told Rocky we had a few minutes for Dwayne. I now kick myself that I only gave 5 minutes to "The Rock"!

Another show we had, my guests were Dave Meltzer, Alex Marvez, and Paul E. Dangerously (Heyman). My co-host was Jim Ross.

I was a kid I sometimes asked stupid questions and sometimes the worst ones at that. My question



to Paul was "Who was the most influential person in your career?" in my young nervous voice. He said "Well, Shannon, you, of course".

That was my first meeting with Paul E. as one day many years after that he gave me a tryout with ECW.

**> Wrestling Press:** What do you remember of the moment when Gordon Solie and Dusty Rhodes approached you to work in Florida as a ring announcer? Were you in awe of these two legends, and did you follow Florida Wrestling growing up?

Honestly I was not a fan of wrestling until the age of 11 so I was not up on the background of Florida wrestling outside of watching WWF. I brushed up over the years and you can pretty much ask me anything on pro wrestling past to present and I can answer it.

I remember the first angle I saw was when John Studd cut the hair of Andre the Giant.

**> Wrestling Press:** What are some of the memorable moments from your radio show?

We had many. My co-host for the radio show was Barry Horowitz for many episodes.

He moved onto other things and filling in his slot was Road Warrior Hawk.

Hawk was great to work with.

I would say the best show we had was the one with Ric Flair.

Gene Okerlund, Bill Apter, and Dave Meltzer also did regular segments on the show.

I remember one Christmas we decided to have some fun. I pulled out my rolodex, cranked up the Christmas Music and started coldcalling everyone.

We called everyone from my family to pro wrestlers. I remember chatting with Roddy Piper, One Man

Gang, Lord Alfred Hayes and the funniest, of course, was the Iron Sheik.

**> Wrestling Press:** You worked for ECW at one point. How did that come about, and what was that promotion like to work for?

I had worked Florida and a few spots outside of Florida as ring announcer for many years. I had become friends with Fonzie and chatted with Paul Heyman a number of times.



Shannon (left) calling the action.

Their ring announcer could not show up and I did not find out I was for sure working until they let me in the building 5 minutes before the show started.

It was incredible and scary as I tried to get out of the way of Sabu and the Dudley's as they threw a guardrail and various other items laying around.

During the Dawn Marie match, she was doing the Bytch gimmick, and was selling how I was scared she was going to yell at me for messing up her name.

The Sandman called me to the curtain, they were very cautious on who was in the back, Taz pops his head out and says "Brother don't be nervous, it's okay".

**> Wrestling Press:** What are some of the wildest things you've experienced or witnessed during your time in the wrestling biz?

Well, I've had items thrown at my head by the Sheik, Southern Posse heaving me off a table and me doing a flip in mid-air, and been hit in the head by a briefcase by Ron Niemi. The best time would be when I was given the spikes by Hawk and on MORETV32 in Tampa (during my local insert on WWF Challenge) I had a chance to tell Hawk, "Tell'em Hawk".

**> Wrestling Press:** Tell us a bit about EDS, how it affects you and how you were diagnosed.

I was diagnosed at age 2. The doctor tried to pick me up and I would not go with him. I would



run and just fall. I went to my paediatrician and he could not figure it out so they sent me to Dr. Kouseff at USF in Tampa, Florida. He found that I had EDS by simply looking at me, no biopsy, no DNA Test, just simple observation.

At age 12, one day waking up my left arm was paralyzed, it was like the color of meat. No feeling, no movement, it was scary, real scary. I remember my dog trying to pick it up with his nose as animals sense bad health.

I was sent everywhere from Miami Children's Hospital to the Mayo Clinic Hospital in Rochester, Minnesota. The Doctors at Mayo could not figure out what was wrong and even flew in a World Renowned Neurologist, Dr. Peter Dick from Germany.

### **I HAD A CHANCE TO TELL HAWK, "TELL 'EM HAWK"**

I remember them doing an EMG which is in 2 parts, 1 part shocking the nerve and the second part sticking a pin down to the nerve to see if it works. Not pretty.

My Dad (who is my best friend) was sitting in the testing room looking on as they did the EMG. They started inserting a needle down my spine and he started tearing. I said "Dad, don't cry, it does not hurt".

I never let things affect me. I am the best person to give tests to. I mentally would always battle back in everything I did. I lost my voice for a year, had a loud cough for a year, and various other odd things happen to me BUT I never let any of these things defeat me.

My words are very clear "I NEVER say I can't but I WILL"



**> Wrestling Press: Doctors didn't give you much hope of living a productive life. How then were you able to do all that you did?**

I had spirit. I had pro wrestling. I had the will to keep pushing through and past whatever was against me.

**> Wrestling Press: What message would you want to get out to other sufferers of EDS?**

1 in 15,000 have this condition. Clinical symptoms such as extreme joint looseness and unusual skin qualities, along with family history, can lead to a diagnosis of EDS.

The outlook for individuals with EDS depends on the type of EDS with which they have been diagnosed. Symptoms vary in severity, even within one sub-type, and the frequency of complications changes on an individual basis. Some individuals have negligible symptoms while others are severely restricted in their daily life. Extreme joint instability and scoliosis may limit a person's mobility. Most individuals will have a normal lifespan. However, those with blood vessel involvement, particularly those with EDS vascular type, have an increased risk of fatal complications.

For more info go to Ehlers Danlos CARES Official Website at <http://ehlersdanlosnetwork.org>

**> Wrestling Press: Is there anything else you'd like to say to readers of the Wrestling Press?**

I now own a PR Company where I represent a number of big name clients and you can see more of them at <http://mediaproductions.tv>

I am also the voice of Pro Wrestling Fusion and their website is at <http://prowrestlingfusion.com>

Also, my personal site just opened at <http://imshannonrose.com>

Thank you for this opportunity and as I close out my events. I will see you at the matches!