

**Kasey Huffman aka Huffmanly**

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Interviewer: Emily Hilliard

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Kasey Huffman (b. September 30, 1995) is a native of Boone County, West Virginia and a professional wrestler with the Madison, WV based promotion ASW (All Star Wrestling). He wrestles under the name Huffmanly, The Leader of the #YEET Movement. He is a life-long wrestling fan. In this interview he talks about his wrestling training, his experience as a wrestler, wrestling as a West Virginia tradition, the importance of AEW to Madison/Boone County, and more.

This interview is part of a series of interviews with independent professional wrestlers in West Virginia.

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Interview Transcript

KH: Kasey Huffman  
EH: Emily Hilliard

00:00

EH: So could you introduce yourself and tell me your name and where you're from and when you were born?

KH: My... oh okay. My name is Kasey Huffman. I'm 23 years old. I'm from Boone County, West Virginia. I was born September 30, 1995.

EH: And why don't you tell me how you got into wrestling?

KH: So it's actually pretty interesting, like I've been into wrestling all my life. My dad used to watch it all the time. I was really born into it. How I got into training--I ended up seeing my heroes come to a small community in Boone County, in Madison, and after seeing them live in my hometown I--it was right there that I wanted to do it.

EH: Who were those heroes?

KH: My heroes, from the 90s but they still wrestle now--they're still pretty big names. It's Jeff Hardy and Matt Hardy.

EH: The Hardy Boys?

KH: Yep.

EH: And what did your dad watch?

KH: My dad--he switched. It was the 90s so he switched back and forth between WWF and WCW but he mainly, like growing up in the you know, 70s and 80s, he watched a bunch of the NWA and stuff like that too.

EH: Do you know if he watched any local stuff like Saturday Night Wrestlin' out of Oak Hill?

KH: That I'm unsure of, but I'm sure he has. I know that there was a promotion that used to go around the East Coast--they used to come to Madison once or twice a year. So he used to go and watch that.

EH: Yeah, I also--oh, Smoky Mountain Wrestling was out of Louisville, maybe?

KH: Yeah, I think so... that territory.

EH: Yeah, I'm looking at some of that old stuff to look at wrestling in West Virginia. What about your family background? What do your parents do?

KH: So neither of my parents have college degrees. My dad, he works at like a body shop so he paints cars for a living. He's done that all of his life. My mom's worked retail jobs. She sort of was a stay at home mom growing up, because they ended up divorcing when I was 6 years old. So she was a stay at

home parent until after I got out of high school. She ended up becoming--working retail--and now she lives in Ohio so she's out of state. But pretty sure that's still what she's doing too.

02:48

EH: What about you--what do you do?

KH: So I manage a small business out of South Charleston. Trying to get people to quit smoking. I do that--I work 40 hours a week usually Monday through Sunday sometimes depending on if I'm wrestling or not. I usually wrestle about 2-3 times a week. So I'm also doing that and working 40 hours too.

EH: And did you go to school?

KH: Yeah, I actually went to college and everything and graduated with a medical assisting degree. So I did that and I did 2 years of community college before that. So I worked as a medical assistant for about 6 months until wrestling started taking off and then I ended up quitting that to focus on that and work at a smaller place.

EH: Where'd you go?

KH: I ended up going to Ross Medical in Kanawha City. Ended up going there and then also went to a, also went to Southern Community and Technical College in Boone County. Also for a few years before I did that.

EH: So why don't you tell me about your first entrance into wrestling and then how you developed your gimmick?

KH: So it was, it was pretty interesting so it's a funny story how I got my actual, like my first start in wrestling. So I was still training at this point and I was training before a show was going on and I took this really bad bump on my head, which happens, you know--it's wrestling. And I went out in the car like right before the show started because as a trainee you're supposed to help out the veterans and stuff working merch tables, doing whatever they tell you to do to help them. But I was in my car just icing my head and drinking a Gatorade and Rocky called me and was like "hey, grab somebody's gear--you're in a match tonight." And by that time I'm already having a headache and I'm on the phone with him saying what, what are you talking about? I'm in a match? And he goes, oh just come inside. And he hangs up on me. So I grab somebody's gear that they had extra of--they were my size. I was in a Battle Royale that night so it was basically just trying to throw each other over the top rope. So I ended up doing that and then ever since then it was just smooth sailing like just my career started going from there. And then--it wasn't I believe I lost every single match I was in until about 4 months in. But then I started doing this gimmick--it's a weird gimmick, I'm sure people reading, listening will know. But it started off where--I do this thing where I scream "Yeet" and it started as like a meme online and stuff. But my friend, his name's Blake Hall, he's 6 foot 5, over 300-pound guy--big teddy bear--he is one of the funniest guys I know, and he looked at me and goes--"I bet you won't say yeet out there while you're wrestling." And I didn't have any wins, I didn't have any gimmick, I wasn't really like this full time wrestler yet, so I started doing it--no one did it at all. It wasn't until about 3 shows in that I was like, I'm just gonna keep doing it just for fun. And then I ended up winning my first match, I believe and then ever since then it stuck with me that I should keep doing it. So now I have this thing it's called The Yeet Movement #TheYeetMovement, which is something sort of like Daniel Bryan with his Yes Movement thing? So it's something like that.

06:47

EH: And the "yeet," does it have a meaning? It's just sort of an online digital meme word?

KH: Sorta, so like if you ask anyone what "yeet" means, it'll be like a different answer. But to me it's a universal word so it can mean anything. I've had fans come up to me and ask me what yeet means and I always ask them, what does it mean to you? And they're always like, "um, win?" I'm like, there it is! That's what it is. So it's to me it's whatever anyone that you know, watches the art that we do, like what I do. It's just a word for them that they can comprehend however they prefer.

EH: And that first match did you have a concussion?

KH: I don't think so but it was weird, so ended up taking, it's called a back body drop where you know, I'm landing really on my shoulders and my back. But for some reason I landed on the back of my head before that. But it wasn't until that match--it just completely went away. It was weird. I guess adrenaline was hitting me, I was super nervous. But I've had a concussion before with wrestling but right there I don't believe so.

EH: As someone with a medical background, how do you feel about the physical aspects of it?

KH: (sighs) Man, it is--I'll just say this--I have been in pain for the past 2 weeks my back. I also have scoliosis. I was a percussionist in high school. I'm in drum line and stuff and that's how I incorporated scoliosis and I never really got it fixed. But I had a hard match about 2 weeks ago that just my back just feels destroyed. You know, this is a very cliché thing. It's not ballet. I feel like everybody that gets into wrestling knows what they're getting into but the fans don't really understand like the pain that we go through. I mean there's times to where I can wrestle and I can be in pain but just it'll go away the next day. And then I can have pain in my back, my legs, my knees, my shoulders that'll last a week. I've had one time to where my back, to where my girlfriend actually had to lift me up and put me places because I couldn't really sit down or bend my back that well. I've had that happen--that was actually just a few months ago. But I feel like with the fans and stuff and the other people that don't really get wrestling--they consider it like acting--they consider it, I'm gonna put it in quotations, "fake," but it is by far like the most real thing I've ever done when it comes to like a physical standpoint. So...

EH: Had you done other sports or athletic activities before?

KH: Yeah, actually I played basketball in high school on a community level, not in a high school level. I played community basketball for 5 years from 8th-12th grade. I also played soccer in high school. I still watch those 2 sports today on TV. But that's about the only sports I really did. My mother wouldn't let me play football. She didn't want me to get hurt, but now she's watching me wrestle.

EH: (laughs) No helmets in wrestling.

KH: Exactly. So this is backlash for her. (laughs) But that's about the only things I really did.

EH: What kind of soccer do you watch? Do you watch English club or do you watch World Cup?

KH: I usually watch English Club, but in high school and stuff I played goalie and midfielder. I was mainly a left midfielder, you know, half and half. I did mainly that and then basketball also played--I played like point guard, shooting guard because of my size. I'm only like 5'10. So compared to everyone else that plays basketball I'm small. (laughs)

EH: Yeah, I'm interested in you know, especially ASW and some of the West Virginia local wrestlers don't necessarily have the body type of what you think of when you think of a wrestler. And there's

actually lots of different types of bodies out there. So was wondering what you thought about that, and just being kind of a smaller guy out there.

KH: Well I feel like with like today's wrestling, you know 20 years ago you had to be this big, 225 pound plus 6'2" person to wrestle but now I feel like within the past 10 years, 15 years even, you know with independent wrestling on the rise, it is, we're in I feel the booming period of independent wrestling. So when it comes to like with fans and stuff, I don't think they care as much. So a lot of like people like me, I weight like 169, 170 pounds now. I started at 140. But I feel like in today's wrestling it doesn't really matter anymore to a certain extent. I mean it does really matter, it depends on storytelling, of course. But with me being a smaller guy, there's even people smaller than me that wrestle a whole lot better than me too. I've seen people that you know have weighed 150 pounds, you know, 20 pounds less than me, take down people that's 280, 285 pounds. When it comes to wrestling--that's with even like picking them up and stuff. So I feel like as long as it comes to like you know, storytelling and stuff, it doesn't really matter anymore. Which I think is a beautiful thing, because I feel like I wouldn't have made it at all 20 years ago if I started out the way I am now.

EH: So do you think that's been a shift--it's left about the physicality-- I mean it's still obviously that too, but more about the narrative?

KH: I believe so. I mean, you know, it's about the physicality as well, but it is also about the narrative I believe, because I feel like with every like wrestler, there's a story behind every single one. It's not just about the match, it's about the person as well. So that's really how I feel about it.

EH: Have you done, in your training does that include other kinds of lifting and running and cardio--that kind of thing?

KH: So usually yes, but for me for some reason I couldn't find the time. It wasn't until like the past few months that I decided to, you know, I need to get in physical shape if I'm gonna do this for you know 20 years like other people have, or 30 years if I can make it that long. But it wasn't until about you know, a few months ago that my social media started to take off with my marketing and stuff like that, that you know I needed to, if I want to make it, I need to do better with myself, my body. But you know, like the people that train me and stuff, they want you to get in better shape, they want you to get in the best shape possible, because you know it's not ballet. And that's very cliché of me to say, again, but, I feel like it's best to get in shape too.

EH: Probably from a health standpoint too.

KH: Oh of course, of course. I'm not the healthiest person, but you know, I'm trying at this point.

EH: And also just protecting yourself from injury. What do you think is the end game for you as a wrestler? What's your goal?

KH: I would be lying to myself if I didn't say that you know, I'd like to make it to a contracted company. I feel like a goal, a big goal for mine is to go to Japan. I'm really into the Japanese culture--not just for wrestling, but I watch anime and stuff like that too, so I want to go there to experience that. I want to go there to wrestle and to learn. I'm always learning every time that I wrestle, every time that I train. I'm learning something new every single day. In Japan they're very shoot style, meaning that you know, they're hard hitters. The culture there--they believe in it. The fans believe that it's real to them. They have a lot of respect towards Japanese wrestling and Japanese wrestlers. There's a lot of American and other English people that go over there just to train. I know people, I don't know them personally, but there's people that's trained for and wrestled for 5 years and will go to Japan and go to their dojo as a green boy

meaning that they'll start off fresh. They're new, they're retraining just so they can get in that culture. That's sort of how Japanese culture is. Not matter where you are, you start at the bottom and you work your way up. So I would love to do that. I would like to, I would like to get a bigger name in the near future. I know it will take a while but I'm very patient, I'm working on myself. I would like to do that. So any type of contracted company, just to say that I've made it out of the independents, just to say you know, even if it's for like a year, just to do that. Also I would like to train people as well in the near future to you know, like Rocky did with me and other people around the West Virginia wrestling community. I would love to do that as well.

17:10

EH: What do you think is particular about wrestling in West Virginia?

KH: It's very, it's very different. I remember 10 years ago, you know at ASW in Madison 15 years ago it would draw like 40, 50 people. Now he's hitting quite a few hundred. Wrestling in West Virginia, I feel like in the past few years there has been nothing compared to now there is quite a few. I'm able to get bookings just in West Virginia ever weekend if not twice a week. Thankfully you know, around West Virginia the farthest I have to drive is around 3 hours if I'm heading up north to Morgantown, Fairmont, Wheeling area down to, if I wanted to go to like Ashland, Kentucky, out there outside of Huntington. I feel like compared to--with wrestling in West Virginia compared to Ohio and the other tristate, we don't give it enough recognition compared to other states, which I feel like isn't fair because West Virginia wrestling, I feel like we have like with everybody that's in West Virginia, I feel like we have a great group of guys, whether we all work the same promotions or not. Because there is in wrestling, there is exclusivity with some super stars as well. Or some wrestlers--I sound like I'm in WWE (laughs). But I feel like we don't get enough recognition because Rocky, Shane Storm, people like that that has wrestled for years and has wrestled names you know, for basically their whole career, and I feel like they don't get the recognition they deserve because they I feel like are the best wrestlers in West Virginia.

EH: What would recognition look like to you? Like recognition from bigger companies?

KH: Sorta. So whenever I say recognition, I sort of mean like as a respect thing. And also as like a social media presence and as a booking presence as well. Like those 2 guys I feel like could work circles around other like most people in West Virginia. Not all, but most people. Just their work ethic you know, they've put time and effort into their art and they've perfected it and they're still working. Shane Storm has been wrestling for 20 years and you know, he can still put out the best matches of his career. I believe he's like 35 now and he's been wrestling for almost 20 years I believe, I believe 17, 18. You know Rocky, Rocky's been wrestling for 10 years now going on 10 years I believe, and he's wrestled the Hardy Boys, Tracy Smothers, Davey Richards, Shane Storm has wrestled so many people that I can't even count that high, including Dusty Rhodes. I feel like they don't get the recognition they deserve compared to other people you see on social media. I feel like, in West Virginia wrestling we're sort of closed off that, compared to like people in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana. You know, their shows are practically the same as ours, but I guess it's just the community there is different. But yeah.

21:07

EH: Why do you think it took hold in recent years? Why is it becoming more popular in West Virginia?

KH: That is a difficult question and I think about that a lot actually. I'm, you know, within the past 2 years, there has been 4 or 5 different promotions just pop up and they've stayed and they're drawing people and they're drawing money. I've been trying to wrap my brain around it for quite a while now and I have to say it's because not only like the marketing standpoint because when it comes to promoting you

want to stand out and you want to have you know, different people, but you still want to have the people that'll you know, draw attention and draw the people to your company, your promotion. I feel like their, which is smart--they have like the same, they get like the 4 or 5 people they want, that'll draw and they'll get people from out of state or maybe that don't wrestle as much and bring 'em in. That way you can build an actual card from you know, your bottom, middle and top. That's really how I feel about it. They're still standing out. You know there's a promotion in Kanawha City. There's one in Dunbar, Hurricane, Madison, West Virginia. There's one in Fairmont, Morgantown. And then there's some, there's some wrestling promotions that'll pop up you know, 2 times a year at a Buffalo Wild Wings, as well.

EH: (laughs)

KH: So, but as far as like it booming, I'm still trying to answer that question. Like I'm still trying to figure out for myself. 'Cause that's something I think about you know, to this day for like the past few months because I wasn't expecting my career to take off as much as it did and to be able to you know, try and perform 2-3 times a week. As far as that, I'm not entirely sure. Maybe it's because of people are tired of watching it on TV now. Maybe people are tired of watching the product, or maybe there's too much wrestling on TV. Maybe they, maybe there is people that you know, they're obsessed with wrestling, of course, I see the same people all the time at all these different promotions. I just feel like in West Virginia, we have like a really big community now with like the past few years with wrestling that, where we're such a small state with wrestling, I feel like mostly the same people come to all the shows, but they're also seeing something different as well. They're not seeing the same thing over and over again even though they're seeing the same people. So I feel like that's, that's one reason why it's booming as well.

EH: And you're from Boone County so you kinda know that community around Madison. But I was at the match where Jim Cornette and Tracy Smothers were there and they all said that Madison is this locus of wrestling in the country. Is there something particular to Madison or Boone County that you think accounts for its popularity there?

KH: I have to give credit where credit is due, and that is to the promoter, because I remember, I remember going there and I was 10, 11 years old and you know, everybody had to sit in bleachers and they just have a wrestling ring there and it would draw like maybe 40-50 people. I've been there when there was 30 people, 20 people, before. And Danville, before--when they would switch from Danville and Madison, you know. But you know, Gary, Gary Damron, the promoter, he has-- I don't know what he has done, but it might have been the people he's brought in. He's been consistent with--he gives people what they want. And I feel like a lot of people could learn from that as well. Instead of like--'cause there's some people that get people who--they want instead of listening to the people there, I'm on the outside to, the fans. But Gary for the past years has put on a perfect show after show after show after show, and he keeps giving people what they want, you know, with credible storylines, the wrestlers, you know people like that. But yeah, I have to give credit where credit's due because I feel like it's with him. Especially in Boone County, because you know, with me being from there, there is not much at all. Especially with you know, coal going away and stuff like that--people losing their jobs. It's sort of like you know they can take their mind off of it for 3 hours a month and one thing about Gary as well, he's not charging 30 bucks to meet 5 famous people, he's charging 12, 13 dollars to sit wherever you want, to meet wrestlers, to meet the indie guys around West Virginia or around the tristate, or the names that he brings. He's not charging people a lot of money for that and he's still--he's doing great. I don't know how he does it. I don't know if I could ever do that.

26:52



EH: Yeah, is there anything else in Madison that brings people out like that, aside for maybe church? (laughs)

KH: Maybe football games? That's about it. High school football games. I'm not from there, I'm not from there anymore. You know, I was raised there for almost 23 years, lived there for 23 years and I recently just moved away about 4 months ago. But still if I'm ever coming to visit on a Friday evening if I have time, I'll always see that football stadium at Scott High School, I still see it filled up all the way and people supporting that school it seems. That's about the only thing. (sighs) I mean they just put in a Taco Bell like last week and I've seen on social media about that place being completely full. (laughs) So at least we have something there in Boone.

EH: Yeah.

KH: That's about the only thing. I mean most stores are going out of business now because of money. I worked at a--while I was in college--I worked at a small business there for 4 years and we had to close down because there was just no money. Everybody's moving away. But when it comes to, you know with wrestling there, I feel like he has that fan base that they will always go to that show at the Madison Civic Center for ASW. Very loyal fan base.

EH: Could you describe the fans? What are they like, what kind of people--just the whole gamut.

KH: Well, over there they are loud. I'm sure people can agree with this. ASW is like the biggest promotion in West Virginia. They drew a thousand people when the Hardy Boys were there. They draw around 400 people consistently a month. 300, 400, 500 people consistently every month. The fan base there, they're loud, if you're a bad guy they'll boo you, if you're a good guy they'll cheer you. They'll always get behind you. Especially for me being a hometown boy. I don't really know a lot of the people. It's weird, even though I was raised there a lot of the people that go to that show I don't really know. But I guess it's just probably with me being younger, probably. But you know they give me the cheers I need, they give me those chants, I don't even have to say it there. I don't even have to say that--they'll just, as soon as my music hits, they're singing the theme song, the Pokémon theme song that I come out to, and they'll chant the yeet thing. But they're very consistent with their cheers and their boos. They're very loud. They respond. They're very responsive. And I'm very thankful for them for doing that because you know, I've been to shows to where people will sit on their hands. And that's just the way they are, it seems like everybody's just sitting on their hands and they're just coming to watch and not be a part of it. That's what I feel about wrestling, especially for me. Whenever I was just you know, considered a fan, I would try to participate as well because you know in that crowd, you're part of the show as well. It's your job to boo the bad guy, cheer the good guy, or cheer whoever you like nowadays, because seems like nowadays with other wrestlers, they're getting cheered when they're bad guys. But it's mainly just based off your personal preference. But people in Madison--very consistent when it comes to that.

EH: And they also have a say in the storyline in a way too because it's dependent on how they respond.

KH: Exactly. Exactly. There's been a lot of storylines I know that have been messed up because the fans didn't really get behind it. So right now, I'm over in Madison--I'm the Boone County Champion. As of like 4 days ago I have held it for a year. And the storyline with me now is that ever since the anniversary show--the anniversary show in April--there has been a mystery voice--the lights going out after every match that I've done and there's been this distortion of a voice saying they're gonna take everything from me. And I believe it is October 12th, 13th, I believe--I can't remember. I know it's one of those days. Whatever the Saturday is that--that I'm facing that voice. And it has been a storyline for about you know, since April, and we don't--no one knows who it is. So and he finally said in the recording while the lights were out on the last show that you know, he would see me next month, and so I put the title on the line. I

said okay, doing that. So in the next show we'll figure out who it is and this has been the storyline since April, so a lot of the fans have been angry saying, oh we need to see him now. They've been saying that for 3 months now, that they're getting, that they're starting to get mad that they don't know who it is and they're blowing up my social medias, my Facebook, everything like that, messaging me saying, oh do you know who it is? Nope! Sure don't! So it's very--they'll tell you how they feel. That type of fan base.

32:39

EH: And so there's sort of a maybe different levels of how people know--well I think everybody knows--but how much people suspend disbelief. I mean there are moments watching it where you're just totally enraptured and it's just like this is real. I mean, I don't care, this is real. But do you think fans have different levels? Regardless of whether this person-- this is like a narrative that's being constructed, people still want to know who that voice is just like any good TV show or whatever.

KH: I say that wrestling is... to me I feel like wrestling is a live action movie with no retakes. It's like a play, right? But it's very physical. But there's still realism to it like when we strike each other, slam each other, that's what--that stuff is real. But I forgot what I was gonna say. Oh--I forgot again for some reason! Will you ask me again if you don't mind?

EH: Yeah, just the way people have different levels of suspending disbelief.

KH: So yeah, when it comes to that, I feel like whenever you come to a wrestling show, you should throw--you should have everything that you think you know and throw it out the window. Everything you believe, take it out, throw it out the window. You know, with wrestling there's different characters, there could be monsters, there could be basketball players that's wrestlers or sports guys, demons, stuff like that. It's a character they portray. And I feel like whenever you're a fan that you should take what you believe and your beliefs and throw it out the window and have a good time. It's like I say this all the time--like wrestling has changed a little bit now. Like with The Undertaker, he debuted in 1990. Imagine that he never debuted and he debuted now in today's wrestling. Fans would hate it. Especially in like not on like an independent level but like WWE level. Because I feel like now people want the real people but you know, gimmicks get over in wrestling. Having a gimmick gets over. Having a gimmick helps draw people in. I believe. You have to stand out. In AEW now there's a guy his names Luchasaurus. He is a wrestlers that wears a dinosaur mask, but it's like a realistic dinosaur mask. It's not like a full helmet type thing. But you know, that stuff--he gets over, he's very popular when it comes to wrestling and I feel like when it comes to that, I feel like gimmicks really get over. I mean the only gimmick I really have is that yeet thing. But you know, that's all I really need. Especially when it comes to like character development, some people say that you want to be yourself but turned to 11. And I feel like I've finally reached that in the past few months. I've finally figured out my character. So, and I feel like when it comes to the fans, they know. Because I know people that's looked at me and said, and has came to a show like my coworkers at my day job that came to a show and they were like, you act nothing like you do at work. And it's like well, you know, I'm sort of myself but I'm also a character too.

EH: Right. What about some of the way stereotypes are played up in wrestling, particularly racial or cultural. Like the guy--he was like the sheik who was at the Hall of Fame Show--I think that was April?

KH: Yeah, I actually wrestled him.

EH: Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah.

KH: The Sheik of Syria.

EH: Yeah, yeah.

KH: I know people--that's actually funny you bring that up because that's actually like a wrestling legend under a mask. It's himself but he wanted to wrestle as just himself and he wanted to wrestle another match, but under a mask. He does that sometimes just to, you know, wrestle twice. I wrestled him that night. But as for that, it's odd because I feel like that type of gimmick, the older generation will like but the younger generation doesn't really care for. Because you know, in the 80s and the 70s that was based off like the stereotypical gimmicks. You know, the Iron Sheik, the Cuban Assassin, Hulk Hogan was this big strong American--the hero. And I feel like in the 80s and stuff a lot of the gimmicks were, you know, if you were a bad guy, you had this stereotypical gimmick. I feel like in today's wrestling, you know, people have like--like I wrestled someone that had a gay gimmick. But he got over because of the way he portrayed his own character. I have a personal friend of mine that, his gimmick is that he's basically an idiot. He gets super over. He's crazy popular. He acts like an idiot in the ring, he acts like he's dumb. He's very popular as well, just the way he portrays himself. I feel like when it comes to that, as like what I said earlier, with your beliefs and throw it out the window, I feel like as long as you can you know, as long as that certain person can make a connection to that crowd, I feel like they won't care. Or you know, some people like the other friend I have where his gimmick is that he's gay, he does it so he can get booed. You know, because in Boone County, West Virginia or in West Virginia in general, a lot of people would laugh at that or you know, boo that but it's crazy because he actually gets cheers when he's supposed to get boos, so it's...

EH: Who is that?

KH: His name is--how did I forget his name and I play video games with him all the time? I've wrestled him too. Gorgeous JC is his wrestling name. Gorgeous JC. He, him and Shane Storm used to be tag team together years ago. And he doesn't really, yeah, he is a super funny guy, one of my favorite people to talk to. He's just hilarious and his gimmick is literally him turned to 11. But you know, he's straight too, he has kids. But he is such an amazing person. Like hilarious human being will do anything for you type person. And he is just a fun guy to be around.

EH: Yeah, yeah I was at a Dunbar show and it was a tag team and there were 2 guys who were, their whole thing was like they were gay and fabulous, and they were wearing like pink t-shirts and had these monkey puppets. And I think they were local guys and they wrestled--it was a guy who had shake weights? And they had a real male stripper kind of vibe going. And the gay guys were kind of larger guys and their whole thing was like, we're gonna kiss you if we beat you. And I was kind of surprised because the crowd really got behind them and hated the bodybuilder male stripper pervy dudes.

40:55

KH: I actually have a good story about my match with Gorgeous JC, so when it comes to wrestling I will do anything to make the crowd go wow or cheer or go oh my gosh. I'll do anything like that. So we did this little thing, this little spot to where I throw a clothesline and he ducks it and he grabs my face and he kisses me. And he was like, man are you okay with that? I said, yeah man, that'll get a reaction out of the crowd! I feel like in wrestling you know, in wrestling you want that reaction so when it comes to that, I don't mind it whatsoever. Even though I was a good guy and he was a bad guy, it got him cheered. I wanna make him look good like he wants to make me look good, because that's what we're trying to do. So the whole match he was trying to kiss me and then he finally got one and the crowd went nuts. They were laughing, I was selling it to where it was like I was disgusted because I wasn't expecting it and I was spitting on the floor and everything like that and everything. Yeah, it was a fun time. As long--when it comes to that--as long as you can make a connection to the crowd, I feel like anything can work.

EH: Why do you do it? Why is it important to you?

KH: Growing up I always idolized Shawn Michaels and Jeff Hardy and people like that. And I always told myself I would do that. I would do professional wrestling. I would try it out, I would be a part of it. Always said that since I was a kid. I wanted to whenever I was in high school, I wanted to train but I never got a chance to. I was always busy--I was in marching band. 6 days a week I was doing music. But it wasn't what I told ya earlier, it wasn't until like I was I believe 20 years old whenever I first started training. I started training in 2017 so I was 21. I was 21 when I first started training and then I believe I trained weekly for almost weekly for about 8 months until I had my first match and it came out of nowhere. I always wanted to prove to myself but not only that but like I was around like the only wrestling fan in my school so I always got made fun of for it. And so I was like, I remember in middle school and stuff, people--they would ask you what you wanted to be and everyone would say a doctor, lawyer, teacher, coal miner and I would always say professional wrestler. And I would get laughed at because you know, a small kid in a small town and big dreams. Mainly I did it to tell everyone that I did it as well. Not only was I trying to prove that to myself but it was more of a thing to them as well. Because I wanted to show people that I have a medical degree, I also can be a professional wrestler. Stuff like that. I have a lot of people that will message me now that you know, picked on me in middle and high school for liking wrestling, asking me if they can get in free (laughs) coming to a wrestling show!

EH: (laughs) Nope!

KH: I won't mention names or anything, but (sighs) I've had at least 2 just this month. Like "Hey man, that's really cool." Or they'll like my wrestling pictures on social media. So it's a pretty crazy feeling and I never would have dreamed that I've made it, you know this far. I'm not even 2 years in yet. And it has went by so fast, you know, everything with the title wins, making friends and wrestling. The only friends I have now are in wrestling. So it's like I have the, I feel like I have the best life I can possibly have and it's only up from here.

EH: Who else would you suggest I talk to if I want to get a picture of wrestling in West Virginia?

KH: Definitely Shane Storm because he has been around for almost 20 years so he's seen the ups and downs of everything. Especially with him being, living in West Virginia all of his life. Plus he has amazing stories.

EH: Where's he from?

KH: Dunbar.

EH: Okay.

KH: Yeah, he's from Dunbar. He's like 5 minutes, 5 seconds away from the rec center. He's very easy to get ahold of too. Rocky and I talk to him every day. He is by far one of my favorite people in wrestling. He was also the other person that trained me. He has the best stories I feel like in wrestling, and he has wrestled the most names I have even known. Yeah, he's wrestled more people than, wrestled more names like you know, famous people than I have matched. If there is, when it comes to ASW, if there's ever a time to where he needs someone to wrestle this famous person, Shane Storm's the perfect person. But if Rocky isn't booked up of course. Shane Storm can wrestle with anyone from legends to new people that's just starting. He can go anywhere like that. He's one of the biggest professionals I've ever met when it comes to that. So he's a fantastic person.

EH: Well is there--oh I forgot to ask--what do your parents, aside from your mom not liking the violence of it, but what do your parents think about it?

KH: So whenever I first started my mom was scared because it was just a mom thing. But now she moved to Ohio. She lives like an hour away from Cleveland. She comes in, she comes in every time there's a show in Madison because whenever she can know watch a show, she can just go to my grandparent's house that is 10 minutes away. My mom is very supportive of it and she loves it now. She says she brags about me, which is nice. My dad-- I feel like me and him got closer once I started because with my parents getting that divorce at a young age, I really didn't get to see my dad. And he was the one that really got me into it. So now he is like my number 1 biggest fan. Sometimes it's embarrassing to be honest with you 'cause I can be in the ring and I can hear everybody cheering, but I can hear him out of everybody. And I can always point him out of the crowd because he is always standing up. My dad's a short guy. I'm taller than both my mom and dad. But I can always see my dad--either standing up in a chair raising his arms, or waving like jumping up and down. He basically, every time that I wrestle it is like I'm graduating high school. And it is--it's an amazing feeling, but it's also embarrassing at the same time when people come up to my table whenever I'm selling my merch and they're like, is that your dad? And I'm like, uh, yeah. It's like I don't know who has more intensity, him or you. I'm like, well I get it from him.

EH: Yeah, come by it honestly.

KH: Yeah. I got my dad's knowledge when it comes to wrestling, through growing up with it since I was born, but I ended up getting my mom's figure, so it kinda sucks. I'm tall and slender. My dad's short and muscular. So I ended up taking after my mom but having my dad's brain.

49:53

EH: Well is there anything else you would like to add?

KH: I feel like there was but I can't remember for the life of me. It was something whenever I was talking about the high school thing. Something came to mind. 'Cause I was thinking of stuff on the way here--questions I feel like if you were going to ask.

EH: [unintelligible]

KH: Yeah, I also have people that like non-wrestling fans that want to train too, that I was in high school with. But oh another thing too--so I was at a wedding this past weekend. And it was a friend of mine that I had in high school. And I haven't seen him in 2 years and I was a part of his wedding. And a lot of people would ask, oh what do you do, and I was like oh, I manage a small business and I'm a professional wrestler. And they were like, oh you're a professional wrestler? And I'm like, yeah, yeah, and sometimes I'm waiting for backlash, like, you know that's fake, right? But surprisingly at this wedding, they were like, they would you know, that guy would hit his wife--not hit his wife, but you know (makes tapping motion) tell his wife, hey, that guy's a professional wrestler. And then I would get embarrassed because I drew attention to myself at another person's wedding. So it's stuff like that. Always whenever you tell someone that you're a professional wrestler that--it's either, "Oh cool, I love wrestling!" and you can tell them about the shows you go on or it's either, "You know that's fake, right?" Which is very offensive. I've seen fist fights over that stuff, which is crazy. But the other thing came to mind just a second ago and I already forgot.

EH: (laughs)

KH: Can't remember if I talked about it or not but it's like--oh yeah, it was about the, sorry about getting off topic to another topic, but it's--I work 40 hours a week and also wrestle 2-3 times a week and there's like not a time, there is maybe 2-3 days a month where I actually have a day to myself and it kinda sucks. And I can't tell you how many times I've thought about wanting to quit wrestling so I can have time to myself. But when it comes to wrestling too, especially if you're trying to make it like with your social media and stuff, your marketing, if you take time off, there's a chance that you could be forgotten. Not with wrestling in West Virginia, but if you're wrestling out of state and you're trying to get out of state bookings to get noticed a little bit more and to try and get a little bit more attention, taking wrestling off, it's a very bad idea. There's been times I've wrestled injured. There's been times I've wrestled sick. And there's also been times that I've wrestled, I've taken, I've had to call in sick at work because they ended up having to change the date. Or that you know, there's been times where at my full time job, that they've needed me to come in and I'm not there. I've missed weddings, I've missed birthdays, I've missed holidays, I have missed--I've had--the only time I've ever taken wrestling off was my grandmother's funeral and the wedding I was at this past Saturday, because that wrestling promotion ended up changing the date to the day before like a month before hand. So I had to cancel. And November makes 2 years that I've been wrestling. I've only cancelled 2 shows in that 2 years and I've wrestled sick. But there's been times to where like my family would be upset that I'm missing my family event because of wrestling. I've missed--my family's from Maryland. I missed the final family reunion, because you know with everybody getting older now with my grandparents and everyone else's grandparents and stuff, there's gonna be no more family reunions and I missed the last one because of wrestling. I'm missing--I'm wrestling on Christmas this year, which is my personal choice, which I don't mind it, I love it. This is my first time wrestling on Christmas.

EH: Will your parents come?

KH: Yeah, yeah, cause my mom will be in my grandparents, my family--they always--they're so supportive of me. I'm very thankful for my family and my friends that come and support. But yeah, it's like--if there's one thing that I can try and tell people that they're, if they're wanting to get into wrestling is tell your family you love them whenever you can because you may never know when you'll see them if you're working full time as well. Or if because to some people, this is also a full time job as well--wrestling is. And I am working myself to death at the moment. I just got my own house. Wrestling also pays for that too. I have my own house with my girlfriend. So another thing, well, if I'm also telling another person about wrestling, about telling your family you love them and stuff, you have to sacrifice a lot for this because you could also be forgotten as well. Especially when it comes to booking if you're wanting promoters to look at you. You're gonna have to sacrifice a lot. You're gonna have to take work off if you're working full time and stuff like that, but I feel like the normal person doesn't understand wrestling as much as people, as much as wrestlers do. I never knew it was gonna be like this, but also I don't regret it. I'm living my best life right now and I wouldn't change it for the world.

I feel like to me, if I didn't have wrestling right now, I don't know where I would be. I believe you were at the show that my friend committed suicide.

EH: Mmmhm.

KH: Yeah that was actually my friend and I found out directly after my match. Completely directly after they took me outside--I found out. I feel like if it wasn't for wrestling than I feel like, I really don't know where I would be. Especially suffering with like depression and stuff growing up. Wrestling was the escape. And I feel like now in West Virginia we can be that escape for other people. I feel like that's our job. But that's mainly...

EH: Yeah, so it's mental health for you but also as a community activity.

KH: Yeah.

EH: Also I mean it's a sober event--there's no alcohol.

KH: Right. There's a few promotions I wrestle for where they serve alcohol but most of the shows I do are family-oriented. Which is crazy because you know with the yeet thing a lot of the kids love it but their parents hate it because they don't know what that means, and they'll always ask me. But even at like usually when it comes to shows, when it comes to like alcohol and stuff, like the adult shows, they're more of like a hardcore wrestling fan base. But thankfully even that yeet thing can get over and get popular with them too so it's a very good thing.

EH: What about health insurance? Do you have it through your job?

KH: Actually, I have health insurance but it is through like a medical card. I have a medical card. But I was thankfully I'm able to that. I was just able to get it like a month ago and I'm just waiting for it to come in.

EH: So is that like an Obamacare thing or is it a...

KH: I can't remember but you know, I actually wrestled, me and Rocky wrestled a triple threat match with 3 people and I got kneed right in the face and it broke a tooth. So that's supposed to be getting fixed. Actually just right down the road here in about a month. I've had a tooth, this tooth pushed up because of a knee. I've landed on my face and scorpioned myself. That actually went viral on social media.

EH: What does that mean?

59:04

KH: So I did this thing it's called a suicide dive to where I basically jumped through the ropes to the outside and I jumped on, I jumped over Shane Storm and landed right on my face, and my legs were over my body basically like I looked like a scorpion to where my feet were over my head touching. Ended up having blood all over my face, I've had concussions. I've never broken a bone! But yet--knock on wood. I hope this is wood.

EH: I don't think it is.

KH: I'll find wood later. But thankfully, you know, the injuries are real. But thankfully I haven't had major ones besides a few cracks in my back teeth. But I'm getting them fixed so I'll have a new look.

EH: Do you worry about that aspect?

KH: I do but usually when it comes to wrestling, you want to protect the other person as much as possible. Both making it look as real as possible. It was a complete accident. I even put, like some people will put hands up if they know they're gonna get like a kick to the face and I even did that but for some reason it just went right into my jaw. It was actually, I had a cut right here and I had to talk with a lisp for about--this happened a week and a half ago and I'm still recovering from it. So that's why it looks like I'm in rough shape. (laughs)

EH: I didn't notice until you mentioned it. Well yeah, anything else you'd like to share?

KH: Maybe to the people that is--it's a book right?

EH: Yes.

KH: To the people reading this, thanks for supporting. You know, everything we do is for them. And basically that's about it.

EH: Thanks so much. This was great.

KH: Thank you.

EH: Yeah.

1:01:11

END OF TAPE

END OF INTERVIEW