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By [JOHN POWELL](#) - SLAM! Wrestling



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The Undertaker's final goodbye. Photo by Ricky Havlik, [RickyHavlik.com](#)

There are some things you just don't want to end. There are some things you want to just go on and on forever. But, that isn't the way life works. Everything



must and should come to an end because if they didn't, the people, those moments wouldn't mean so much to us in the first place.

I remember Mark Calaway debuting as The Undertaker at Survivor Series in 1990 as a part of Ted DiBiase's Million Dollar Team. For me, it was the perfect mash-up of two of my favourite things, two of my life-long passions: horror movies and professional wrestling. I thought it was especially cool that 'Taker always sat up like Michael Myers in all those *Halloween* movies.



Yeah, I marked out each and every time.

Despite some of his goofy trappings or maybe because of them, I gravitated towards The Undertaker. Frustrated with Hulk Hogan's stranglehold on the WWE and the WWE Championship, nothing made me happier than to see Undertaker defeat Hogan at The Gravest Challenge, Survivor Series 1991.



The Undertaker and Paul Bearer. (Photo



Courtesy of: The WWE.)

Even though the Deadman would go on to only hold the title for six days, Hogan's defeat and subsequently Hulk-A-Mania's (Puke-A-Mania's) at the hands of The Undertaker cemented him as one of my all-time favourite wrestlers and over the years that never changed.

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Thank you, Taker.

Seven years later, at a WWF press conference at SkyDome, I literally bumped into the Deadman. How could anyone miss the guy? He was a freaking giant. I honestly had no idea how truly massive The Undertaker was until I was standing in front of him, face to face, or face to chest as it were.

While many of the mainstream journalists swarmed him with their ridiculous questions, I knew I had to get Calaway's attention somehow. So, I called him by his real name and asked him why he changed his entrance music after all these years and just like that, The Deadman turned around and so began [an interview](#) of a lifetime and one I will never forget to this very day. He stood there absolutely ignoring everyone else as we chatted for about 15 minutes or so. It was an amazing moment.



Old school Undertaker. (Photo Courtesy of: The WWE.)

The one thing I will always remember about that chance meeting is not just how tall but how massive Mark Calaway was. It isn't just that he is a tall dude at 6-foot-10. He is an immense guy. His forearms and his thighs are really like tree trunks. He is not the type of guy you would want to mess with not only in a WWE ring but in a dark alley somewhere but one also got the sense by the way he carried himself that he understood and respected his own power and only used it when he absolutely had to.

Calaway is a giant among men but at that time to me speaking to me in his everyday voice and not the roar we are all used to hearing, he was a friendly giant of a man. Him taking a few minutes out of his day to speak to me made for one of the most memorable moments of my career and a feather in my cap that I am proud of.

Thank you, Taker.

A big part of my admiration for The Undertaker character was the presence of Paul Bearer. Being a horror fan I immediately took a shine to William Moody's take on the Gomez Addams character originally played by John Astin in the classic television series, *The Addams Family*. Moody was brilliant in the role and as the voice of The Undertaker for years and years, much like Paul Heyman is the advocate for Brock Lesnar today. Bearer added a whole other dimension to Undertaker's character, so much so, I and many other fans couldn't ever fathom The Deadman without him at his side. We could never have predicted those dark days ahead for the Phenom and who we thought was his faithful manager.



The Undertaker borrows from Hellraiser. (Photo Courtesy of: The WWE.)

Thank you, Bearer.

Speaking of being without someone, Yokozuna with

the help of Harvey Wipplema's cronies, stunned fans by winning the Casket Match against The Undertaker at the Royal Rumble in 1994. After being sealed in the coffin --- how rude! -- The Undertaker floated up to the heavens in perhaps one of the coolest and also goofiest moments in WWE history. For seven months, the WWE was without The Undertaker and things just didn't feel quite the same even though we all knew Calaway needed the time to heal from a back injury.

Embroided in a dueling Undertakers angle when he returned, The Deadman seemed to have a new sense of purpose and determination even though the WWE was going through one of its downward spirals. That's the thing though. No matter how bad things got, how many times WWE creative dropped the ball, we could always count on The Undertaker to remain as rock solid as he always was and had been.

Thank you, Taker.

In the late 1990s, The Undertaker proved to everyone that in order to thrive and survive in the oftentimes cutthroat wrestling business you had to take risks and evolve your character. When The Lord of Darkness persona emerged I was intrigued. Clearly borrowing from Clive Barker's *Hellraiser* movies, in particular the Cenobite demons, The Undertaker had once again brought my two favourite things together and in the Attitude Era; the new, more sinister Undertaker fit right in despite later losing Paul Bearer to Mankind and his "brother" Kane. No matter if it was crucifying Steve Austin, throwing Mankind off of Hell in a Cell or kidnapping Stephanie McMahon, The Undertaker was just as important to the Attitude Era as Steve Austin, Mankind, The Rock, the McMahons and D-Generation X.

Thank you, Taker.



The American Bad Ass. (Photo Courtesy of: The WWE.)

Once again changing with the times, The Phenom embarked on his biggest makeover yet and in a shocker dropped all of the supernatural paraphernalia that was the core of his character and transformed into the American Bad Ass, Big Evil personas. Whether you truly accepted Calaway without all of his horror elements, what cannot be denied is his feuds with Ric Flair, Kurt Angle, The Dudley Boyz, Big Show and Brock Lesnar helped carry the WWE through an uncertain time after the Attitude Era has played itself out and the Invasion angle flopped very, very, very, badly.

Thank you, Taker.

The welcome return of the Deadman character would come at a price. The Undertaker had become a highlight of WrestleMania every year, turning in more unforgettable moments, matches than anyone ever in the history of the WWE. The Streak became

not a part of The Undertaker's mystique but a part of his storied history. When the WWE (Vince McMahon) decided to end The Undertaker's stream at [WrestleMania XXX](#), long-time fans like myself were outraged. For all that he had given to the industry and the WWE, [I had thought that](#) he not only deserved to but earned the right to retire with The Streak still intact but sadly he was never afforded that luxury.

Whether Mark Calaway agreed to or was the one who proffered ending The Streak in the first place, makes no difference. The WWE Powers That Be should never have allowed it out of respect for someone who had given so much and was just as responsible for the success of the WWE as Steve Austin, Hulk Hogan and The Rock. It is the least the WWE could have done.

As a wise person once said though, no achievement can ever be taken away once it has been achieved.

Thank you, Taker.

While I would have loved to see Mark Calaway "fight forever" like two of my other all-time favourites Ric Flair and Randy "Macho Man" Savage, all good things must come to an end. That just like the legends that came before them, icons like The Undertaker too must gracefully step out of the spotlight and allow new talent to shine and become the new Undertakers, the new Nature Boys and the new Macho Men.



The Undertaker in a classic pose. (Photo Courtesy of: The WWE.)

Just like the end of summer or when the clock strikes midnight on Christmas day, none of us would ever really appreciate the memorable things in life if they were to go on forever. Their imminent conclusion is what makes us live in the moment and realize what those things really mean to us and how precious they really and truly are.

To wrestling scribes and fans like myself, Mark Calaway is arguably the greatest WWE superstar to ever step through the ropes, then, now and forever. There will never be another Undertaker.

For all of those unforgettable moments, for giving all that you had to the industry whether it be inside or outside the ring, for never being satisfied with the status quo and pushing yourself and the WWE to be the best that it could be, for bringing out the very best in each and every opponent and for bringing this wrestling's fans two life-long passions together ...

Thank you, Taker.

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