

## Shawn Michaels

**Michael Shawn Hickenbottom** (born July 22, 1965), better known by his ring name **Shawn Michaels**, is an American professional wrestling personality, television presenter and retired professional wrestler. Currently signed to WWE, as an ambassador and trainer, since December 2010. Michaels wrestled consistently for WWE, formerly the World Wrestling Federation (WWF), from 1988 until his first retirement in 1998. He held non-wrestling roles from 1998 to 2000 and resumed wrestling in 2002 until retiring ceremoniously in 2010. In the WWF/E, Michaels headlined major pay-per-view events between 1989 and 2010, closing the company's flagship annual event, *WrestleMania*, five times. He was the co-founder and original leader of the successful stable, D-Generation X. He also wrestled in the American Wrestling Association (AWA), where he founded The Midnight Rockers with Marty Jannetty in 1985. After winning the AWA Tag Team Championship twice, the team continued to the WWF as The Rockers, and had a high-profile breakup in January 1992. Within the year, Michaels would twice challenge for the WWF World Heavyweight Championship and win his first WWF Intercontinental Championship, heralding his arrival as one of the industry's premier singles stars. He won the *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* "Match of the Year" reader vote a record eleven times.

Widely considered as one of the greatest professional wrestlers of all time, Michaels is a four-time world champion, having held the WWF World Heavyweight Championship three times and WWE's World Heavyweight Championship once. He is also a two-time Royal Rumble winner, the first WWF Grand Slam Champion and the fourth WWF Triple Crown Champion, as well as a 2011 WWE Hall of Fame inductee. Hickenbottom began to train under Mexican professional wrestler Jose Lothario. During his training, Hickenbottom adopted the ring name, "Shawn Michaels". After his training with Lothario, he debuted as Shawn Michaels with the National Wrestling Alliance's (NWA) Mid-South Wrestling on October 16, 1984, against Art Crews, losing to Crews via swinging neck breaker. Michaels' performance in his debut match impressed many veterans, including Terry Taylor.

In January 1985, he debuted for World Class Championship Wrestling (WCCW), the NWA territory in Dallas, Texas. In April 1985, Michaels went to work for another NWA territory in Kansas City called Central States Wrestling. There, he and tag team partner Marty Jannetty defeated The Batten Twins for the NWA Central States Tag Team Championship, later losing it back to the Battens.

Michaels made his national-level debut, as Sean Michaels, at the age of 20 in the American Wrestling Association (AWA), in a victory over Buddhakhan on ESPN. He was once again teamed with Marty Jannetty, billed as The Midnight Rockers. The Midnight Rockers won the AWA World Tag Team Championship, defeating Doug Somers and Buddy Rose. In 1987, a competing promotion signed The Rockers: the World Wrestling Federation (WWF). They were fired from WWF two weeks later, for a bar incident (a misunderstanding, per Michaels' autobiography). They then returned to AWA, but were re-signed by WWF a year later. The Rockers debuted at a WWF live event on July 7, 1988. Due to WWF chairman Vince McMahon's desire to have his performers carry WWF-exclusive ring names, Michaels and Jannetty were renamed, as simply "The Rockers." The team proved popular with both children and women, and was a mid-card stalwart of television and pay-per-view shows for the next two years; during this time, Michaels headlined his first pay-per-view for the WWF when The Rockers were involved in the 4-on-4 Survivor Series match main event of the 1989 Survivor Series.

At the suggestion of Curt Hennig, Michaels adopted the nickname "The Heartbreak Kid". Along with his new name came a new gimmick as a vain, cocky villain. He was put together with mirror-carrying manager, Sensational Sherri, who, according to the storyline, had become infatuated with him Sherri even sang the first version of his new theme music, "Sexy Boy".] During that period, after Michaels had wrestled his scheduled match at live events, his departure was announced with "Shawn Michaels has left the building", alluding to the phrase "Elvis has left the building".

A rebel in leather chaps, Michaels bucked authority and surrounded himself with people who did the same. As the troublemaker behind DX, HBK made life a living hell for the McMahon family alongside his longtime running buddy Triple H. As a member of The Kliq, he did the same for the WWE locker room, carefully wielding his considerable influence to get the best treatment for himself and friends like Kevin Nash and Scott Hall.

The self-proclaimed “Sexy Boy” could be an unrepentant primadonna, but he was so fluid and brilliant in the ring that it hardly mattered. His Ladder Match with Razor Ramon at WrestleMania X established his reputation for having the best bout on The Grandest Stage of Them All — a tradition he’d continue in classics against Kurt Angle, Chris Jericho and The Undertaker.

HBK’s thrilling run was nearly brought to an early end when a back injury put him out for more than four years. In that time, he fell in love, had children, found religion. When he finally returned, Michaels displayed none of the flaws that plague many Superstars in their final years in the ring. Instead, The Icon continued to have career-defining matches right up until his last stand against The Phenom at WrestleMania XXVI.

Although it was one of the final times WWE fans would hear the crack of Sweet Chin Music, audiences did not mourn HBK’s retirement. Instead, they celebrated it, grateful to have witnessed the evolution of Shawn Michaels from high-flying Rocker to WWE Hall of Famer.

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