

WILLIAMS, ORIG ('El Bandito') (1931 - 2009), footballer, wrestler, promoter and journalist

Name: Orig Williams
Date of birth: 1931
Date of death: 2009
Spouse: Wendy Kay Williams (née Young)
Child: Tara Bethan Williams
Parent: Ellen Ann Williams
Gender: Male
Occupation: footballer, wrestler, promoter and journalist
Area of activity: Sports and Leisure Pursuits; Literature and Writing
Author: Barry Jenkins

Orig Williams was born on 20 March 1931 at 7 High Street, Ysbyty Ifan, Caernarfonshire, the son of Ellen Ann (Nellie) Williams, a domestic servant. No father is noted on his birth certificate.

Ysbyty Ifan was a tough place to grow up. The men of the village would often speak of strongmen they had encountered and the young boys would fight for their social position, both of which gave Orig a love of physical challenges. Aged eleven he gained a place at Llanrwst Grammar School where his obsession with sport, in particular football, grew. He also developed an affinity for Welsh literature and poetry.

In 1949 he joined the RAF to fulfil his national service. Initially ridiculed for being Welsh, he showed remarkable physical and mental prowess which earned him a recommendation to serve as aircrew, but he declined, preferring to be a clerk as it allowed him more time to play football and work out in the gym.

Upon completion of his national service Williams was offered a trial at Oldham Athletic Football Club, which he gleefully accepted. He was also asked to try out for Wales Amateurs but, despite his deep patriotism, he declined and signed for Oldham as a professional. After a physical confrontation with Oldham management, he left for Shrewsbury before suffering an injury that would end his career in England.

Back in Ysbyty Ifan and working as an apprentice carpenter Williams was visited by Welsh football legend Tommy Jones, who offered him a playing role at Pwllheli. He eventually became player/manager at the club and began writing a column for the matchday programme. Leaving Pwllheli, he became player/manager of Nantlle Vale. The team soon became notorious for their physical style of play, something led by Williams who was thought to be the most sent-off player in the league. Dwindling crowds, in part because of ITV airing wrestling at match times, and increasing problems with the footballing authorities led Williams to retire from football.

With few options and determined to avoid becoming a farm labourer, Williams contacted a wrestling promoter to express interest. After a crash course in basic wrestling he was sent on a tour of Ireland. Although his performances were satisfactory he knew he needed to gain more experience, so the promoter sent him to Cornwall to work as part of a fairground attraction. Orig Williams soon became one of the most respected wrestlers in the United Kingdom, gaining a reputation for being a solid worker. He was offered a chance to wrestle in India where he took on the famous Indian champion Imam Bux and his son the Great Bholu. During his time in India he asked by Bholu to go to Pakistan, where he would regularly wrestle in front of crowds reaching 100,000. He remained abroad for eighteen months, wrestling in Asia, the United States and Europe.

Returning to Britain Orig Williams became one of British wrestling's most notorious 'bad guy' wrestlers, using the ring-name 'El Bandito' which he acquired in America because his trademark moustache made him look like a Mexican. He soon began to promote his own shows, often booking himself to save money. He also trained upcoming British wrestlers, some of whom would go on to be very successful, such as William Regal and Klondyke Kate, both of whom have expressed their appreciation for his support. He worked extensively with S4C on their show *Reslo* in the 1980s as wrestler, organiser and host. The show was at the forefront of televised British wrestling, becoming the first to show women's matches regularly as well as promoting theme matches such as cage, chair and ladders, and was the last regularly scheduled British wrestling programme on television until it ceased to air in 1995.

Orig Williams married Wendy Kay Roberts in 1983 and they settled in Llanfair Talhaearn. They had one daughter, Tara Bethan, who became an actress and singer.

During his time on *Reslo* Williams continued his journalism, writing a controversial but popular column, 'Siarad Plaen' ('Plain Speaking') for the *North Wales Daily Post*. His columns were often deeply rooted in Welsh nationalism, particularly the fight to keep the language alive and relevant. In 1985 he published his autobiography in Welsh entitled *Cario'r Ddraig* ('Carrying the Dragon'). In recognition of his contribution to the Welsh language he was admitted to the Gorsedd of Bards at the National Eisteddfod in 2000.

Despite his quick temper and physically imposing stature, Orig Williams was a kind and generous man. He operated an open house for his wrestlers, was known to help those who were struggling, and was also keen to ensure that all of those who worked for him would become better wrestlers as a result.

Orig Williams died of a heart attack in St Asaph on 12 November 2009. He was buried in New Cemetery, Rhuddlan.

His dedication to Welsh football was honoured in 2019 when Llansannan and Nantlle Vale, two teams close to his heart, competed for the Orig Williams Cup.

Author

Barry Jenkins

Sources

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William Regal, Neil Chandler, *Walking a Golden Mile: World Wrestling Entertainment* (2010)

Dean Jones, 'Llansannan and Nantlle Vale to contest friendly cup in memory of wrestling legend Orig Williams', *Rhyl Journal*, 13 July 2019, accessed 10/03/2022

Further reading

Wikipedia Article: [Orig Williams](#)

Archif ITV Cymru/Wales: [Orig Williams, Wales's most famous wrestler, talking about his career in 1985](#)

Additional Links

VIAF: 9518553

Wikidata: Q7102440

Published date: 2023-11-07

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PDF Print Cite

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APA Citation



Jenkins, B., (2023). WILLIAMS, ORIG ('El Bandito') (1931 - 2009), footballer, wrestler, promoter and journalist. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 9 Nov 2024, from <https://biography.wales/article/s14-WILL-ORI-1931>

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