

= Stuart Tomlinson =

Stuart Charles Tomlinson (born 22 May 1985) is an English professional wrestler and retired professional football goalkeeper . He is signed to WWE , where he performs under the ring name Hugo Knox .

As a footballer , Tomlinson progressed from the Crewe Alexandra youth team to turn professional in 2003 . He spent the next six years with the club , spending part of 2004 on loan at Stafford Rangers , and playing once on loan for Burton Albion in 2008 . He spent the 2009 ? 10 campaign at Conference club Barrow , where he shared goalkeeping responsibilities with Tim Deasy . He then signed with Port Vale , and was favoured ahead of Chris Martin for the 2010 ? 11 and 2011 ? 12 campaigns , before choosing to leave the club in July 2012 . He signed with Burton Albion in September 2012 , but retired through injury in July 2013 .

In December 2013 , Tomlinson began training as a professional wrestler on a developmental contract with WWE , making his debut at a WWE NXT live event on 8 November 2014 .

= = Football career = =

= = = Crewe Alexandra = = =

Having graduated through the club 's youth academy , Tomlinson made his senior debut for Crewe Alexandra in a Second Division clash with Oldham Athletic on 25 January 2003 , replacing Danny Milosevic on 51 minutes after the Australian suffered an injury . He conceded a goal to Chris Armstrong after his view was obscured by a group of players , though Crewe ran out 3 ? 1 winners at Boundary Park . At the end of the season he signed his first professional contract , and Crewe were promoted into the First Division as runners up in the Second Division .

His second game came on 17 March 2004 at the Boleyn Ground ; he replaced Clayton Ince after 86 minutes with the score 4 ? 2 to West Ham United , after Ince was stretchered off with a knee injury . The eighteen @-@ year @-@ old held his nerve in front of over 30 @,@ 000 spectators and no goals were scored in the brief period he was on the pitch . Later in the year he had a loan spell at local non @-@ league side Stafford Rangers .

After recovering from a twisted ankle , Tomlinson 's next senior game was at Sincil Bank on 23 August 2005 , where he replaced loanee Ben Williams at half @-@ time . Lincoln City knocked the " Railwaymen " out of the League Cup , putting two past Williams and three past Tomlinson for a 5 ? 2 victory . His first start came in the FA Cup Third Round clash at Deepdale on 7 January 2006 , the home side coming out 2 ? 1 winners . He played his first Championship game on 28 January , replacing Ross Turnbull at half @-@ time ; Watford put two past each man for a 4 ? 1 win . After signing a one @-@ year contract extension in March , Tomlinson got his first league start on 30 April , as Crewe beat Millwall 4 ? 2 , Ben May scoring both of the " Lions " goals .

In May 2006 , Burton Albion put in a request to sign Tomlinson to a season long loan . The move was delayed after Tomlinson picked up a calf injury , before he managed to join Burton in time for a pre @-@ season friendly with Sheffield Wednesday . However Crewe reconsidered the loan deal and so Nigel Clough instead signed aged veteran Kevin Poole . Clough was still keen to sign Tomlinson , with the saga continuing well into the season , though no deal was made . Tomlinson picked up his first senior clean sheet on 22 August 2006 , during a 3 ? 0 win at Grimsby Town 's Blundell Park in the League Cup First Round . The Crewe website described a " heroic effort " from Tomlinson in the Football League Trophy tie with Rochdale on 31 October , as he managed to three of Rochdale 's four penalties (the penalty he did not save was a miss) . Dario Gradi said : " Stuart is outstanding on penalties because he is positive and doesn 't flop over " . He went on to play seven League One games , and also made one appearance in the FA Cup . However he did not play in the 2007 end of the season , partly due to a torn groin that kept him out of action for a number of weeks . In the summer there was once again talk of a possible loan move to Burton .

He was only used by Steve Holland once throughout the 2007 ? 08 season , playing in a 1 ? 1 draw

with Chester City in the Football League Trophy on 4 September ; Chester won the game 4 ? 3 on penalties . Not long after this he was on the sidelines with a broken thumb . In February , Tomlinson finally joined Conference club Burton Albion on a one @-@ month loan . He played 90 minutes for " Brewers " in a 3 ? 1 defeat to Histon on 1 March , and was forced to make numerous saves . He played no further part of Burton 's season after he sustained an injury to his cruciate ligaments .

After six months of rehab he recovered earlier than expected . His 2008 ? 09 season started on 25 November , as Gradi gave him a start at the Walkers Stadium , where Leicester City won 2 ? 1 . The next month he played six games , keeping four clean sheets (against Carlisle United , Cheltenham Town , Swindon Town and Millwall) . However he attracted criticism from his manager at the end of January following heavy defeats to Northampton Town and Peterborough United , and was subsequently dropped . New manager Gudjon Thordarson told him that he would not be offered a new contract at the end of the season , thus ending Tomlinson 's long association with the club .

= = = Barrow = = =

In July 2009 he joined Port Vale for pre @-@ season training , playing 45 minutes of a pre @-@ season friendly . Micky Adams considered signing Tomlinson up whilst first choice keeper Joe Anyon was out injured . He impressed on his trial and would have been signed to a contract if the cash @-@ strapped club could find the finance , instead Adams considered offering Tomlinson non @-@ contract terms . However , Tomlinson left the club to search for a more permanent offer elsewhere . In August 2009 he joined Barrow of the Conference , just two days before the start of their season . Sharing first team duties with Tim Deasy , he appeared 27 times for Barrow in the 2009 ? 10 campaign . He also won the FA Trophy with the club , appearing in the final at Wembley Stadium , where the " Bluebirds " beat Stevenage Borough 2 ? 1 .

= = = Port Vale = = =

Tomlinson chose not to renew his Barrow contract at the end of the season , and instead signed a one @-@ year contract at Port Vale in May 2010 . Anyon had at by this time left Vale Park for Lincoln City , and Tomlinson was brought into provide competition for teenager Chris Martin . This required him to accept a lower wage than he would have got at Barrow .

? Micky Adams on Tomlinson .

Adams surprised many by selecting Tomlinson as the goalkeeper in the opening game of the season , and Tomlinson rewarded his manager by keeping a clean sheet . Tomlinson praised his defence for his solid start to the season . With five clean sheets in his first ten games , Tomlinson was offered a one @-@ year contract extension in September 2010 . Two months later he was reported in the Daily Star and the Daily Mirror to be a £ 250 @,@ 000 transfer target for Sheffield United and Queens Park Rangers . Adams dismissed such speculation with the comment " that amount of money wouldn 't buy Stuart 's left hand " . Sent off on New Year 's Day after a collision with Rotherham United 's Marcus Marshall , Tomlinson lost his place in the first eleven due to injury and suspension , but then won back his place after Martin conceded a comical own goal in a 3 ? 1 defeat to Stevenage on 22 February . It was an eventful return for Tomlinson , who broke the story of Jim Gannon and Geoff Horsfield 's bust @-@ up on the pre @-@ match coach trip to Aldershot via Twitter . The game itself was also eventful , as Tomlinson gave away a penalty , which he then saved , only to leave the pitch due to a hip injury . Martin regained his first team place after the game , only to be replaced by Tomlinson at half @-@ time during a 2 ? 1 loss at home to Oxford United on 12 March , after Martin committed another blunder .

Following the return of Micky Adams as Port Vale manager , Tomlinson held on to his first team place at the start of the 2011 ? 12 season , though Martin was used in cup games . Neither Tomlinson or Martin could find the consistency to secure their first team place though ; Tomlinson conceded twelve goals in his first seven games of the season , whilst Martin conceded ten times in his first five games . Assistant manager Mark Grew told the media that " they 've both been disappointing " . On 29 October , Tomlinson was embarrassed to be caught off his line by Oxford

United 's Peter Leven , who found the net with a ' sensational 45 @-@ yard strike ' . Adams said " ... in the division , he 's the only player who would have scored that ... [but] you have to question the keeper 's starting position . " He was still preferred to Martin though , and only a thigh injury kept him out of two league games in January . He returned to the first team , and was heading for a third consecutive clean sheet on 14 February when he committed an " injury @-@ time howler " to allow Bradford City a share of the points at Valley Parade . On 10 March he spilled a cross to hand Barnet striker Ben May an easy winner at Vale Park . He vowed to improve his consistency , saying " I 'm a pretty confident person and it will take a lot to stop me bouncing back . " At the end of the season he rejected the club 's offer of a new contract , and his departure was announced on 3 July . He said that he was " not particularly worried " about his free agent status , and that he would turn down similar offers from other clubs and wait until as late as the start of the following season until the " right opportunity " came about .

= = = Burton Albion = = =

In September 2012 , Tomlinson signed a four @-@ month contract with Burton Albion , having previously been on trial at Preston North End . He joined the " Brewers " after manager Gary Rowett was dissatisfied with the performances of Ross Atkins and Dean Lyness . After keeping a clean sheet on his debut , in a 1 ? 0 win over Rochdale at Spotland on 8 September , assistant manager Kevin Summerfield said that " the biggest difference for me was that we were playing the game in their half and they were defending corners because he [Tomlinson] can kick the ball so far up the pitch " . He was aiming for a longer stay at the Pirelli Stadium , but a knee injury sustained in a home draw with former club Port Vale left him sidelined for up to six months . He recovered to full fitness in half that time , and signed a new contract in February to extend his stay at Burton until summer 2014 . Burton reached the play @-@ offs at the end of the 2012 ? 13 season , but were defeated 5 ? 4 by Bradford City at the semi @-@ final stage . Tomlinson retired in July 2013 after surgeons advised him that scar tissue damage and a tear in his anterior cruciate ligament meant that his left knee was in poor shape and was vulnerable to further damage .

= = = Style of play = = =

A goalkeeper with a flair for shot @-@ stopping , Tomlinson could kick the ball with either foot . Due to his muscular physique , he was given the nickname " the Tank " .

? Barrow manager David Bayliss upon losing Tomlinson to Port Vale in June 2010 .

= = Professional wrestling career = =

= = = WWE = = =

= = = NXT (2014 ? present) = = =

In December 2013 , Tomlinson travelled to the United States to be trained as a professional wrestler on a developmental contract by WWE . He was assigned to the WWE Performance Center , where he took the ring name Hugo Knox . He stated that " Hugo Knox is a lively , high @-@ energy and bubbly guy " with " the smallest polka dot pants possible ! " . He made his in @-@ ring debut for WWE 's developmental territory , NXT , at a live event on 8 November 2014 .

= = Modeling = =

Tomlinson has worked as a professional model , appearing on the front cover of Men 's Health .

= = Career statistics = =

Notes

Stafford Rangers statistics unavailable .

= = Honours = =

with Crewe Alexandra

Football League Second Division runner @-@ up : 2002 ? 03

with Barrow

FA Trophy winner : 2010