Did the Bareback Time Machine Kill Chad Noel?

April 9, 2010 By Mark S. King

Welcome to the POZ Podium

The POZ Podium is a platform for opinions, insights, rants and raves from all corners of the HIV/AIDS community.

On the POZ Podium, we invite thought leaders and provocateurs to ponder and postulate the most pressing issues affecting people living with HIV/AIDS.

The opinions of POZ Podium contributors are theirs. They do not reflect the opinions of Smart + Strong or *POZ*, and neither is responsible for the accuracy of any of the information contained on the POZ Podium.

We encourage your active participation in the discussion. Please comment at the end of each POZ Podium. Wish to write for us or want to suggest a topic? Contact news@poz.com.

AIDS advocate and writer Mark S. King contemplates the all-too-brief life and AIDS-related death of Chad Noel, a.k.a. barebacking gay porn star Donny Price.

Among the many online condolences to the family of Chad Noel ("Jim and Bonnie, so sorry to hear of the loss of your son…") are glimpses of the boy this young man was, while growing up in the ironic hometown of Laramie, Wyoming (where Matthew Shepard lived and perished). Noel, 25, died last month, reportedly of AIDS-related complications.

"I remember him playing with me in my pretend kitchen and being one of the only boys to not pick on me," writes Kendra of her gay adolescent friend on the Laramie Boomerang's online obituary page. "Chad was my Senior Prom date, it was truly one of the funnest nights of my life," adds Rebecca. Reminiscences of his smile and humor abound in posted comments under his one-sentence death notice.

Little did Rebecca know that her date would quickly become gay porn actor Donny Price (why is everyone who does a porn film a STAR?). Very quickly, in fact. He was only 18 years old when he made his first video for a studio specializing in scenes of unprotected sex (known as barebacking).

And now, seven years later, the young man is dead of AIDS. How very 1985.

Certainly it couldn't be as simple as this. There must have been co-factors, such as his refusal to get tested, perhaps, or take HIV medications. My experience with addiction makes me suspect crystal meth abuse, a raging epidemic of its own among sexually active gay men. An overdose, maybe? (The Noel family was awaiting autopsy results when the obituary appeared last week.) Something, anything that would explain how a young man would put himself continually at risk for a lethal virus without accessing potentially life-saving treatments, and all the while flaunting his disregard in front of cameras for the carnal delight of others.

Already the online debate on barebacking and even serosorting (seeking out sexual partners who share your HIV status) has been reignited. The fingers of gay activists and public health advocates are being waved, pointed and poked over what prevention technique has failed and which gay cultural defect is to blame.

Has my gay community longed for a pre-AIDS sexual reality so desperately that treatment advances have swept us back to a time when unprotected sex was without horrific consequences? Has porn made barebacking such a fetish that "use a condom every time" can't compete with oily close-ups of condomless sex? Have advocates like me treated risky behavior among gay men with kid gloves, too easily attributing unsafe sex to "a search for intimacy" or a "post-AIDS mentality?"

Barely legal age, Chad Noel bought into it all. He'd never known a world without HIV and yet it was invisible to him, unacknowledged by his sexual choices or perhaps mocked by them. He was screwing in a time machine and partying like it was 1989. He died like it, too.

Chad was just out of high school when his fatal sexual destiny was set into motion, so the online condolences are primarily from classmates. The messages read like yearbook autographs, some from boys but mostly girls to whom he was kind. "Lost boy goes home," signs Morgan. Chad was adrift indeed, perhaps unknowingly, in the confusion of sexual maturity and decision making.

Nothing in his short life, and no one it seems, led him to safe ground.

Click here to read more from My Fabulous Disease (King's blog).

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/podium-mark-king-18271-6320