

NXT Takeover: Rival: Follow That, Wrestlemania

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Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Rich Brennan, Corey Graves, Jason Albert

It's been less than two months since the last Takeover and NXT is starting to crank up the frequency of these specials. The main story coming in is fallout from last time as Kevin Owens is challenging former best friend Sami Zayn for the NXT Title after betraying new champion Zayn at the end of the last show. Let's get to it.

The opening video gives us a quick background of every major match.

Hideo Itami vs. Tyler Breeze

This was set up late last week after Itami lost in the semi-finals of the #1 contenders tournament and was attacked by Breeze. A blonde woman jumps Breeze during his entrance and is quickly dragged away. She was too good looking to be a real fan. Hideo misses a running kick to start but nails a clothesline out of the corner. A forearm knocks Breeze to the floor and Hideo dropkicks him out of the air. Tyler wakes up and goes after the knee to take over by ramming it into the apron and dropping some elbows. The knee is wrapped around the post and Breeze slaps on the Figure Four around the post as well.

Back in and Breeze puts on a unique submission hold which is kind of a Texas Cloverleaf/Figure Four/Sharpshooter combination. Itami gets to the ropes and tries the GTS, only to have Breeze escape and hit the Supermodel Kick for two. I guess selling doesn't translate to Japanese. Hideo starts Hulking Up and kicks Breeze in the head before firing off a series of them to the chest. He is nice enough to limp a bit after doing the offense with no issues. A running delayed dropkick in the corner and a running big boot to the face is enough to pin Breeze at 8:20.

Rating: B-. Entertaining match but the lack of selling got annoying in a hurry. It's also not a good sign that Hideo was right back to kicks only offense. Yeah he varies them up a bit, but they're all just kicks no matter how you look at it. Breeze is getting to the point where he puts over so many people that it's not meaning as much. Itami needed a win though and this was his biggest in a singles match to date.

Baron Corbin vs. Bull Dempsey

No DQ. Corbin charges at him to start and they fight on the floor with Dempsey hitting a suplex onto the ramp. He posts Baron as well and takes him inside, only to get caught in a spinebuster for two. Corbin charges him out to the floor where Bull runs him over again. Back in and the flying headbutt gets two on Corbin, sending a frustrated Dempsey outside for a chair. That takes a bit too long though and Corbin catches him in End of Days for the pin at 4:11.

Rating: C. Good brawl but my goodness let it be over now. These two didn't need to fight again after the first two times but it kept going for the sake of having another match here. That's unlike NXT and I really hope it's nothing that becomes normal. At least the right guy won and they kept it short.

Tag Team Titles: Blake and Murphy vs. Lucha Dragons

Blake and Murphy beat the Dragons to win the belts a few weeks back and this is the rematch. They've also lost their first names during their title reign. Cara and Murphy get things going but it's very quickly off to Blake, who eats a spinning cross body. The champs take over and Kalisto gets the tag, only to botch a dive over the top.

Instead a victory roll gets two out of the corner before Cara slams Kalisto onto Murphy for the same. This match is kind of all over the place so far. Back to Blake as the champs take over with some fast tags and quick offense. Kalisto gets another hot tag and cleans house with his rolling kick to the head and low hurricanrana but Murphy counters the Salida Del Sol. A powerbomb gets two on Kalisto and they hit a pinfall reversal sequence until both partners make saves at the same time.

Cara rolls Blake into a powerbomb for two but Murphy rolls out for two of his own. It's quickly back to Murphy who can't roll out of the powerbomb as everything breaks down again. Kalisto is knocked off the apron and Murphy hits a running suplex on Cara, setting up a great looking frog splash from Blake to retain the titles at 7:28.

Rating: C. This was entertaining but kind of sloppy. They didn't really try for any kind of psychology but the champs looked smooth out there and the match worked well enough for what it was going for. Blake and Murphy are actually good champions and work well together, though I could use a big more to separate them. Still though, good enough stuff.

During the champs' celebration, we get the longest Solomon hack to date, complete with "Next week" coming up on screen.

Recap of the #1 contenders tournament, which quickly turns into a video on Neville vs. Balor. Both of them have worked hard to get here and they're ready to go through the other to get their shot at the title.

#1 Contenders Tournament Final: Finn Balor vs. Adrian Neville

Balor does his full on painted, crawling entrance. Neville runs him over to start and grabs a headlock on the mat. That's fine with Finn who rolls through and hits a basement dropkick to the face, sending Adrian rolling out to the floor. Back in and Finn runs him over again before slapping on a chinlock. Balor escapes and goes to the apron but gets dropkicked down while trying a springboard. This is a chess match so far. A delayed suplex gets two for Adrian and it's another chinlock.

Finn is out quicker this time though and he kicks Neville out to the floor for a huge flip dive. After taking a few moments to get up, Balor slowly stalks around the ring and hits a running dropkick to send Neville through the barricade. Back in and a top rope stomp to the back of the head gets two more for Balor and frustration is setting in. Neville wins a kick off but Finn scores with a Pele to put both guys down again.

Adrian is up first and muscles Finn over for a German suplex and now it's his turn to be frustrated. A middle rope Phoenix Splash gets two on Balor but he comes back with a Sling Blade to put Adrian down again. Finn's

running clothesline turns Neville inside out and a reverse implant DDT gets two more. Neville scores with a pair of kicks to the head but the Red Arrow hits knees, allowing Finn to hook a small package for a VERY close two. I totally bought that as the finish. Now it's Balor going up for a top rope double stomp to the ribs for the pin and the title shot at 13:32.

Rating: A. Now THIS worked. Both guys were rocking the whole time and this was one heck of a back and forth showdown. Balor is being treated as the real deal and they're doing a great job of rocketing him up the card. This was a great war with some white hot near falls with both guys looking great and topping each other until Neville just couldn't get up anymore.

They shake hands post match.

Video on the four way Women's Title match which is a pretty simple idea: Charlotte has the belt, all three other girls want it, and they're willing to fight everyone to get it.

Women's Title: Charlotte vs. Becky Lynch vs. Bayley vs. Sasha Banks

Other than the main event, this is the match I've been looking forward to more than anything else, including Balor vs. Neville. It's a basic title feud but they've executed it so well that I want to see it. Consider that this is the company that also has the Bellas being pushed to Mars and back and you'll be even more astounded by that. It's a big brawl to start with Charlotte knocking both villains to the floor but getting rolled up for two.

Now it's Bayley getting double teamed with a double clothesline and then just being thrown into the corner. Banks and Lynch of course get into an argument over who should get the cover. Sasha turns her back on her partner though and gets launched with a kind of pumphandle throw. Lynch goes after Bayley's bad knee and puts on a kind of reverse figure four but Banks makes the save. Becky hits a missile dropkick to put Sasha down for two but it's Charlotte making the save.

The champ starts busting out neckbreakers for two each before getting in

a slugout with Banks. Sasha gets the better of it and whips Charlotte into the ropes, only to have her spear Becky down. Bayley gets back in and catches Sasha in an assisted Codebreaker but Charlotte boots her in the face. Sasha sends Charlotte shoulder first into the post and drapes her over the middle rope. She puts Becky across the bottom rope for good measure and drives her knees into Charlotte's ribs to send her into Lynch for two on both of them.

Bayley throws Banks down and it's down to Bayley vs. Charlotte. A series of running elbows in the corner have Charlotte reeling and Bayley tightens the ponytail to make it serious. Bayley scores with a top rope hurricanrana and the Belly to Bayley but Becky pulls her out to the floor. That's too much for Bayley as she snaps on Lynch, only to have Sasha dive through the ropes to take both girls down.

The champ has a breather but screw that because she dives onto all three to put everyone down. Back in and Lynch hits an exploder suplex for two on Charlotte. Bayley breaks up something out of the corner and German suplexes Becky, setting up a super Belly to Bayley on Charlotte but Sasha dives in for the save and a VERY closer near fall of her own. The Bank Statement goes on but Sasha lets go to kick Becky down. She slaps the hold on again before rolling Charlotte up in a crucifix for the pin and the title at 11:57.

Rating: A-. FOLLOW THAT BELLAS! I would have ended it with the stolen pin off the superplex but good grief these girls are awesome. These matches are always a highlight and it never ceases to amaze me how hard they blow the Divas out of the water. Actually check that. The NXT girls and the Divas don't belong in the same water. Awesome stuff here and the NXT girls continue to get more and more amazing every time.

Charlotte hugs the new champ post match but gets shoved away by the Boss.

We recap Zayn vs. Owens, which is all about jealousy from Owens. Sami won the belt at the last Takeover and Owens turned on him during the celebration. Owens has been there with Zayn the whole time but Sami was called up first. That title means a better life for Kevin's family and he'll do whatever it takes to win it. Sami just wants to hurt Owens no

matter what it takes.

NXT Title: Kevin Owens vs. Sami Zayn

We get the tracking shots of both guys coming to the ring, which is a trend I'd love to see come back. After the big match intros, they stare each other down as the fans are mostly behind the champ. Owens bails to the floor to get inside Sami's head and we're in full on Zbyszko mode. Sami finally just dives over the top to take Owens down before throwing him inside for a beating. A hot shot breaks up Sami's momentum and the pro-dirty traitors strike up the FIGHT OWENS FIGHT chants.

Owens rips the skin off Sami's chest with a chop and Sami quickly loses a slugout. We hit the chinlock on the champ to get a breather before Kevin just grinds his forearm into Sami's jaw. Sami tries to fight up but gets dropped ribs first over the top rope for two. Back to the chinlock which makes sense as Kevin has been trying to grind Sami down. A hard belly to back suplex gets two and they head outside so Sami can be rammed into the apron.

The fans have switched up to KILL OWENS KILL as he takes the champ back inside to yell in his face. Owens also puts fists to his face before a gutbuster gets two. Sami jawbreaks out of the third chinlock as the announcers bring up Lesnar vs. Cena from Summerslam. That's not the longest stretch in the world. Sami fights back with some clotheslines, including a big one to send Kevin to the floor.

Now it's Owens going into the steps and getting his head taken off with a clothesline. Back in and Sami hits the Blue Thunder Bomb for two but the Helluva Kick is countered with a huge superkick. There's the Cannonball for two and the pumphandle driver onto the knee gets an even closer near fall. The popup powerbomb is countered with a dropkick and the Half and Half suplex gets two for the champ.

Kevin snaps the throat over the top rope but gets caught on the same rope, only to knock Sami down. He spits at the champ but his Swanton Bomb hits knees. The Exploder Suplex into the corner looks to set up the Helluva Kick but Owens bails to the floor. Owens can't hit the apron powerbomb so Sami hits the bouncing moonsault, only to have both guys

bang their heads on the ramp. Sami can barely stand and staggers on the attempt at the Helluva Kick, allowing Owens to hit the popup powerbomb for an even closer two.

Owens just unloads with right hands to the head and the champ's eyes are glazed over. He pounds away in the ropes and keeps getting dragged away by the referee. The trainer comes out to check on Sami but Owens powerbombs Sami again. A second powerbomb has Sami out cold but he slowly rolls his shoulder up to keep this going. The trainer gets in the ring now, earning Zayn two more powerbombs. Kevin loads up a fifth in a row and the referee finally pulls him off to stop the match at 23:12, giving Owens the title.

Rating: A-. This was absolutely brutal and a great way to get the title off Zayn. Owens looks like a killer, but the key thing here is he could not pin Sami. This sets up a big time gimmick rematch as well as writes Sami off TV while he on the international tour during the next TV tapings. In other words, NXT has come up with a way to avoid their champion not being around for over a month of TV, because they're that much smarter than WWE. Excellent stuff here with Sami looking like a warrior and Owens looking like the most awesome monster this side of Brock Lesnar.

Oh and next up: Owens vs. Balor.

A smiling Owens stands over Sami to end the show.

Overall Rating: A. Good grief. I mean just good freaking grief. How in the world does NXT manage to keep blowing away every bit of wrestling WWE can put out time after time? I'm not sure if any of the three big matches here were as good as the triple threat from the Rumble (and they likely weren't due to the stage the Rumble was on), but I'll take three awesome matches over one incredible triple threat any day.

Another outstanding show here with the wrestlers working themselves to the bone to make the whole thing work. There are stories, character development, great matches and hard work all around and there's no way that doesn't equal an excellent show. NXT is still on fire and shows no signs of slowing down with even more names on the way, like Crowe and

that trio of amateur guys that have been getting rave reviews. Great stuff here and again, if this doesn't give you enough reason to buy the Network, I don't know what more you could ask for.

Results

Hideo Itami b. Tyler Breeze – Big boot

Baron Corbin b. Bull Dempsey – End of Days

Blake and Murphy b. Lucha Dragons – Frog splash to Cara

Finn Balor b. Adrian Neville – Top rope double stomp

Sasha Banks b. Charlotte, Becky Lynch and Bayley – Rollup to Charlotte

Kevin Owens b. Sami Zayn via referee stoppage

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