

Takeover: Chicago II Preview



IMG Credit: WWE

It's time, once again, for everybody to come aboard the Takeover train. We're back in Chicago for the second year in a row and hopefully we get a match that matches last year's Tyler Bate vs. Pete Dunne for the United Kingdom Title. The card looks solid this time around and there's a chance that it lives up to the hype. It's the usual five match card and that has worked very well for NXT in the past. Let's get to it.

Ricochet vs. Velveteen Dream

We'll start with one that could go either way. Dream is one of the few times where WWE has built someone from the ground up and he plays the gimmick as perfectly as anyone could have possibly done. At the same time though, you have Ricochet who is still pretty new (his first on screen appearance for NXT was only back in January with his in-ring debut two months ago). The idea here is a fight over the spotlight with Dream saying he can do anything better than Ricochet, earning himself a heck of a shutting up with Ricochet's flip over the ropes to the floor.

You could go either way here but I can't imagine Ricochet losing this time. While Dream needs a big win at some point, he has the kind of gimmick that can bounce back from a single loss. Ricochet on the other hand is newer and hasn't had a

major win during his short time with the promotion. Ricochet wins here with some kind of impressive flip to take the spotlight from Dream, who moves on to his next obsession and probably gets the big win there. Either way, they're both going to be fine for different reasons each.

Tag Team Titles: Undisputed Era(c) vs. Danny Burch/Oney Lorcan

This one feels more like more of a foregone conclusion and that's just fine. The Undisputed Era has held the titles since January (albeit with Roderick Strong coming in as a replacement for the injured Bobby Fish with Adam Cole defending the titles during a major match as well) and could hold them for a very long time. Burch and Lorcan are fine for a pretty thrown together team but they're still going to be able to go after the titles in a short term yet well done story.

In case it's not clear, I'll take the champions to retain here, albeit in a good match. You can have Burch and Lorcan get very close but ultimately fall to the better team, which is going to enhance the champions and give Burch and Lorcan a boost at the same time. They can continue to be a team if necessary and feud with some of the other teams in the division. Maybe they'll get back to the titles later, but for now they're just going to put the Undisputed Era over and that's perfectly fine.

Women's Title: Shayna Baszler(c) vs. Nikki Cross

Now this one actually interests me as we have two women who break the rules in entirely different ways. The big idea here is that Baszler has gone after Dakota Kai but now Cross has come in and stood up for Kai while also being just crazy enough that she throws Baszler off. The idea here is Baszler broke the rules to get here but Cross breaks the rules of being a sane and rational human being.

I'm going with Baszler to retain here as Cross certainly

doesn't need the title to get over as a star (though I'd be very curious to see how she acted as the champion). Baszler is the kind of champion where you need someone to be built up over time and slay the dragon who cheated her way through the system to get to the title. This should be a heck of a fight and I'm hoping it ends with Cross smiling and laughing ala Raven at Souled Out 1998 as she passes out. It wouldn't make sense to have her tap and Baszler should be disturbed by what she sees, which is all you need to sell the story.

Johnny Gargano vs. Tommaso Ciampa

Oh dear. Oh dear indeed. I'm not sure on having this one happen again so soon but there's a little more to it than that. First of all, there's the problem that the first match was one of the best matches NXT has ever done. It was unsanctioned and I'm not sure how different that's going to be than a street fight. They've added some extra stuff here with Candice LeRae not approving of what Gargano does, and you can almost guarantee that it's going to factor into the finish.

I'm going to take Ciampa here, likely setting up a third match between the two for the big blowoff. I'd have LeRae cost Gargano the match, albeit not having her change sides or anything of course. LeRae can come out and beg Gargano to stop or something and Ciampa can get the win as a result as she wants to have her husband back and is trying to appeal to the last of his humanity. The final match can see LeRae backing Gargano one more time so he can slay Ciampa once and for all, likely in Brooklyn. But yeah, Ciampa wins here, setting up the third and final match in the war.

NXT Title: Aleister Black(c) vs. Lars Sullivan

This one is similar to the Tag Team Title match as Sullivan might not be the most likely option to win the title but it's not like it would be the biggest shock in the world. Black is in a weird place as he's kind of just off to the side while

Gargano and Ciampa have the top feud in the promotion. I'm still not sure he needed to win the title yet, especially as we're more than two months into Andrade Cien Almas moving up to the main roster and he still hasn't had a major match yet. Did they really need to have Black get the title at this point?

I'll go with Black to retain though, even if he doesn't manage to hit Black Mass. There are other things they could do, like have Sullivan get annoyed and throw the ref down for a DQ (not really an NXT way to finish things) or just keep beating on Black until he gets disqualified. Either way, I think Black retains the title and they'll do something else between these two later on, which is about as good as anything else they can do until we get a better challenger build up for Black. The match will be fine with a fired up Black fighting a gorilla but it's going to take something special to blow the roof off.

Overall Thoughts

Overall....I think I actually have some more confidence in this one than I do in most Takeovers. Nothing on the card looks bad and there's a good chance that all of them live up to the hype (save for maybe Gargano vs. Ciampa, which is fighting an uphill battle). Takeover has yet to really disappoint me and I have no reason to believe that this will be anything more than very entertaining. Ricochet and Dream could steal the night, but on a show where everyone is trying to do just that, it's a little easier said than done.

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