

Best Of 2018: Match Of The Year



IMG Credit: WWE

So this one is coming after Wrestler Of The Year, which was the Johnny Gargano vs. Tommaso Ciampa race. Well guess where we are all over again. You're going to see those names a lot in this and I don't think that requires much of an explanation. This was actually an incredible year for in-ring work and NXT ran away with just about every accolade you can imagine (again). But which topped them all?

Sweet goodness where do I start?

Aleister Black vs. Adam Cole – Takeover: Philadelphia

I'm going to say this a lot but what a match. The idea here was Cole couldn't hang in a fight with a brawler like Black and that was pretty much exactly what happened. It wound up being an incredible brawl with Cole throwing everything he had at him and getting his head kicked off, as so many people had felt. NXT hadn't started doing the violent matches as frequently yet so this was a treat.

Tommaso Ciampa vs. Velveteen Dream – Takeover: WarGames II

This is a match that shouldn't have been as good but they pulled it off anyway because both guys know how to bring it on the big stage. Dream was one of the least likely title contenders (Did you really believe he was

winning here?) but he had some great near falls and nearly pulled off the huge upset. That's the sign of a great match: when you know where it's going to end but get sucked into it anyway. They pulled it off here, which I didn't expect.

Velveteen Dream vs. Ricochet – Takeover: Chicago

With all of the athletic spectacles to behold this year, it was nice to have one that had a clearer story. This match was built up on the idea of both guys wanting to steal the show and get all the spotlight, which was Dream's eventual downfall. Ricochet may be the best high flier in the world right now and Dream tried to hang in the air with him, eventually causing himself to crash and burn. It's an incredible showcase, as Ricochet continues to become one of the brightest stars anywhere.

North American Title Ladder Match – Takeover: New Orleans

Meltzer gave this five stars and it might be the fourth best match of the year in NXT alone. I was in the arena for this one and I've never gasped so much, including the time I saw Shane McMahon dive off of the Cell. This was the spotfest to end all spotfests (not named TLC or involving a certain trio of tag teams) with the place getting more and more into it until Adam Cole gave the fans exactly what they wanted. Go and watch this one if you love a great bit of insanity with some of the coolest spots you'll see in a long time. The thirty minutes feels like less than half of that and it just doesn't stop.

Johnny Gargano vs. Tommaso Ciampa – Takeover: Chicago

We'll get to round one later but here we have the rematch. The first match was about emotion and the two getting their hands on each other. This one was about two guys beating the fire out of each other and hurting one another as much as they could. They destroyed the ring and some of the arena but it evened the score and meant that we would be seeing a third match. After what they did the first two times, it's not like you had to ask twice.

Johnny Gargano vs. Andrade Cien Almas – Takeover: Philadelphia

Ten years ago, Royal Rumble 2008 was built around the idea of Jeff Could Win. Well this was Johnny Could Win, as he was coming off a horrible losing streak but if he had his head on straight, he could pull off anything. Johnny came into Philadelphia with his head on straighter than ever before but Almas knocked it off time and time again. That set up some of the most dramatic near falls that you'll ever see and an absolutely incredible match that could have gone either way.

Like it could be anything else.

Johnny Gargano vs. Tommaso Ciampa – Takeover: New Orleans

I don't know what to say here. The build was nearly a year in the making and these two wanted to kill each other. That's nearly what they did too, with one of the best performances I've ever seen. From Ciampa coming out to no music and just soaking in the hatred to the YOU DESERVE IT chants when Ciampa landed on bare concrete to the awesome near fall on Gargano to Gargano winning, going to the stage to pose and looking over his shoulder to avoid Ciampa attacking him again, I haven't been on a roller coaster like this at a show ever before and I can't imagine I ever will be again.

Then again I said that about Takeover not being topped and couldn't have been more wrong so I'm probably off again here.

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