

Takeover: Phoenix Preview



IMG Credit: WWE

I'm really not sure what to say about Takeover anymore. You know it's going to be great. You know it's going to be impressive. You know it's going to be one of the best shows of the year. We're WAY past the point of believing that it's going to be anything else, so now the question is how good can it be. This show's card is rather impressive and there's a good chance that their first show in the desert could be great. Let's get to it.

Women's Title: Shayna Baszler(c) vs. Bianca Belair

We'll start off with a match that got a great boost from the final push. I'm not completely sold on how the match is going to go as Belair doesn't have much experience against a top name as she's only wrestled a bunch of squashes and Nikki Cross for the most part. That being said, Baszler is someone who can help carry her through and the story of Belair being the natural athlete not being able to handle someone with the skills and experience of Baszler. It worked in Top Gun.

I really could see this going either way but I'll go with Baszler retaining. Belair is someone who is going to come back and win the title later on, perhaps on a big episode of TV, but I think she needs to learn something before getting the ultimate goal. The idea of Baszler catching her for trying to

do something a little too big or impressive works for me, though I also wouldn't be shocked to see Belair win, sending Baszler into the Women's Royal Rumble and the main roster in general. I'll go with Baszler retaining, but her days are numbered.

Matt Riddle vs. Kassius Ohno

This is one where the ending isn't exactly in doubt. Riddle is going to be one of the biggest stars in NXT and Ohno's entire job is to put people over. Ohno has already lost to him twice, both times in pretty definitive fashions. There is still the possibility of Keith Lee turning on Riddle to cost him the match, though that seems to be a bit of a bad idea, especially after Lee has lost twice now.

I'll go with Riddle winning here, which is exactly what he should do. Lee can take him out after the match or on the next TV show, but having Ohno defeat Riddle, even through shenanigans, doesn't make a ton of sense. Going with what makes sense fits NXT far better than anything else. Riddle wins, though watch out for the rather large and athletic man lurking around.

Tag Team Titles: Undisputed Era(c) vs. War Raiders

I'm thinking this one is a little more straightforward like the previous match. The War Raiders debuted last year around Wrestlemania time and I don't think have actually lost a match since (a rather common trope around here and something that works well because, believe it or not, wins and losses matter in wrestling). The Undisputed Era has held the titles almost uninterrupted since November 2017 and it's time for a change.

So yeah we'll go with the title change here because there's no reason for it not to happen. The Raiders have been built up perfectly for this and the Era is pretty much out of people to face. Let them chase the titles for the time being until someone else gets built up to take the titles from the Raiders

several months from now. It makes sense, and NXT isn't the kind of place to go completely off the beaten path with some crazy move.

North American Title: Ricochet(c) vs. Johnny Gargano

Yes. That word seems rather appropriate here as there's a very strong chance that this is going to be a match of the year candidate. These two tend to do that and I could very easily see Ricochet moving up towards the main event scene in short order. He's that good, and his star power has been on the rise since his debut, when it was huge in the first place. However, does he lose the title here to someone who is already a major star?

The more I think about it, the less sure I am. I'm going with Gargano winning the title in an upset here as he embraces the darkness even more and goes full on evil to win the title, likely running off Candice LeRae in the process. This is all setting up an insanely awesome tag match with Aleister Black/Ricochet vs. the evil DIY (if the title wasn't a factor, that could be the feature match in New York) and having Ricochet chase the title that he was cheated out of could work wonderfully. Gargano wins, in my least confident pick of the show.

NXT Title: Tommaso Ciampa(c) vs. Aleister Black

This is actually a weird one as I'm not sure what's going to happen. The match itself is more of a stopping point on the major story and I'm not sure where that's going to end. I do like the idea of having the Takeover match not needing to be the big definitive ending because the story isn't ready to be there yet. Black deserves his rematch and the aggression he shows against the master manipulator should be great.

However, it's not going to be enough as Gargano likely helps Ciampa retain the title, reforming the team once and for all (or at least until Johnny exorcises his demons and wins the

title in the biggest blowoff NXT will ever have). Black can join forces with Ricochet (sadly not Velveteen Dream it seems) and set up the dream tag match, but this time around it's the evil DIY standing tall to end the show.

Overall Thoughts

It's kind of a weird show in the series as it feels like a pit stop on the way towards the New York show. The cool thing about NXT though is they know how to make this work anyway and I want to see the show. It might be one of the weaker Takeovers, but that means it more like the poorest millionaire. The show is going to rock and that's all that matters. It's also all that's expected, which isn't something you can say about much anything else.

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