

Takeover: XXX: If This Is Bad, They're Going To Be Fine



IMG Credit: WWE

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Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Corey Graves, Vic Joseph, Beth Phoenix

It's time for the milestone edition of the show and this time around it's not exactly feeling like that important of an entry. Maybe it's the rushed build to the show or the lack of star power, but there is something missing here. The main event should be a heck of a hoss fight between Keith Lee and Karrion Kross for the NXT Title. Let's get to it.

Kickoff Show: Breezango vs. Legado del Fantasma vs. Oney Lorcan/Danny Burch

For the #1 contendership. Fandango jumps Mendoza to start and goes to the apron with Oney. Oney is knocked to the floor and Fandango hits a heck of a clothesline to Mendoza. Burch comes back in and gets small packaged for two, meaning it's time for the showdown with Lorcan. Fandango gyrates while Lorcan glares but Mendoza gets up to run the corner and hits a springboard corkscrew dive.

Back in and Lorcan DDTs Breeze while Mendoza neckbreakers Lorcan for two each. The hot tag (yes there are tags in this) brings in Burch to clean house, including the German suplexes. Something that looked like a Domsday Device is broken up as Wilde slips out of the electric chair. Lorcan's uppercut gets two on Wilde as everything breaks down again. A Spanish Fly into the 450 gives Mendoza two with Burch and Lorcan making the save. Back up and Breeze hits a quick superkick for the pin on Lorcan at 6:56.

Rating: C. They didn't have much to do here and I can't say I'm surprised at the winners. That being said, Breezango vs. Imperium isn't all that interesting, though it's not like anyone else is getting much out of Imperium these days. They need to do something with the titles and if that means Breezango as transitional champions, so be it. Good enough choice for an opener though.

The opening video looks at the history of Takeover before going into your traditional look at all of the matches.

Timothy Thatcher vs. Finn Balor

Grudge match after Thatcher cost Balor a spots in the North American Title ladder match. Balor charges at him in the corner to start but gets taken to the mat which isn't likely to go well. They go to the grappling with Balor working on the arm but getting caught in a front facelock for his efforts. Balor gets up and strikes Thatcher against the ropes before taking it back down to the mat to crank on the leg.

Thatcher hits him in the face and puts on a bow and arrow hold as Balor can't get away from the holds. Balor flips over into a cover for two but Thatcher is right back with a Kimura. The arm is pinned back and Thatcher puts on something like an abdominal stretch on the mat. They get back up but Balor can't get away from the grip, instead having to backdrop Thatcher into a cover for two. The hold still isn't broken but Balor rolls into a basement dropkick for the much needed break.

They slug it out with Thatcher getting the better of it until Balor drops

him with a Pele for the double knockdown. Balor gets in a double stomp and tries 1916 but has to slip out of a fireman's carry. This time it's Thatcher getting caught in the abdominal stretch with Balor planting him again. The Coup de Grace misses though and Balor bangs up his knee again. The half crab goes on but Balor slips out.

That's fine with Thatcher, who kicks him in the back but Balor switches places and gets in a kick to the ribs. Thatcher gets in a shot to the face but gets rolled into the abdominal stretch again. The next reversal lets Thatcher grab an ankle lock so Balor rolls out and hits a double stomp. Another double stomp sets up the Coup de Grace but the knee means there can't be a cover. 1916 connects to give Balor the clean pin at 14:16.

Rating: B-. It was a good grappling match but the ending was a little flat. Balor just started hitting his moves and then won with his finishers. I didn't think Thatcher was going to win (though maybe he should have) but I was hoping for something a little better than that. What we got was good though and I'll take that over something completely flat.

Bayley and Sasha Banks are here.

Video on the North American Title ladder match, including everyone qualifying.

North American Title: Damian Priest vs. Johnny Gargano vs. Velveteen Dream vs. Cameron Grimes vs. Bronson Reed

Ladder match for the vacant title. It's a brawl to start (duh) until Reed (in Bam Bam Bigelow inspired gear) and Priest are left alone. Dream comes back in to break it up with a DDT as Grimes pulls out the first ladder...which is about three feet tall. He isn't pleased but gets knocked down by Priest, only to come back with a big kick to the chest. Gargano pulls in his own full sized ladder and Grimes brings in a second. It's Grimes going up, only to get caught with a leg on each ladder as they are spread apart, leaving Grimes in the splits.

Reed comes back in and cleans house, including dropping a backplash onto

a ladder onto Dream's chest. More house is cleaned as Reed sets up a ladder but he has to shove Gargano up as he tries to climb the standing ladder. Gargano's next attempt to go up is countered into a powerbomb attempt from Reed but Dream takes out Reed's knee. Gargano wants Grimes and Dream to help him but goes up, only to get caught. Johnny: "I had to try it!"

It's Grimes in trouble this time around until Gargano crotches Dream on top. Priest crushes Grimes into a ladder into Dream's head but it's Reed cleaning house to take over. The massive Tower of Doom is broken up and Gargano is the only one left standing. Reed takes care of him and Grimes is sent off the ladder and into the rope. Priest is all alone on top of the ladder but Dream makes the save. That means kicks to Gargano and Dream's heads so Gargano hits the slingshot DDT to the ladder around Reed's neck.

Gargano heads outside but gets caught with the standing flip belly to belly from Grimes. Reed dives onto them but Grimes is up first to load up the ladder inside. For some reason he sets it up next to the ropes and Priest runs up the bridged ladder to take out everyone with a flip dive. Grimes goes up but Candice LeRae runs in for the save. Corey: "Maybe Candice just wants directions to the moon."

Candice tries a headscissors but Gargano goes with a ladder to Grimes' head for a more effective move. Gargano goes up so Reed knocks him off, only to have Candice climb onto his back. Reed dives off onto Gargano for the big triple splash (Corey: "The Wednesday night's been squashed!") Since Gargano is mostly dead, Reed goes up but Priest is waiting on him. Grimes has his own bigger ladder as Reed is knocked down. Reed sends Grimes off the big ladder onto the regular one but Dream makes a save, only to get his leg tied into the falling ladder.

Dream is back up to bridge a ladder from the middle rope into the standing one before going up. The title is swinging away so Dream can't get it, allowing Priest to shove him down. Priest drops down and knocks Reed down, only to have Grimes hit the Cave In. Grimes climbs until Gargano hits a powerbomb to send him into the bridged ladder. Instead of climbing, Gargano fires off superkicks but the One Final Beat is

countered by Dream into a Dream Valley Driver onto Priest onto a ladder.

It's Dream climbing this time but Reed shoves the ladder over, sending Dream bouncing off the top rope and over the barricade for the huge crash of the match. Grimes is up on the ladder for the title with Gargano making the save this time. Priest and Gargano go up and the title is unhooked, with Priest knocking Gargano down to win the title at 21:16.

Rating: B+. This was long and chaotic, which is exactly what you want out of something like a five way ladder match. I had Grimes winning but Priest is the second best choice as Gargano doesn't need the title, Reed isn't ready, and Dream probably shouldn't be near...well anything at the moment. That Dream spot was great and there's something special about seeing him in extreme pain at the moment. Good, long match here and I liked it more than I expected.

We recap Pat McAfee vs. Adam Cole. McAfee mocked Cole for being small on his podcast and for thinking that he's the king of NXT. Then McAfee invaded NXT and punted Cole in the face for a big knockout. McAfee went on to have some of the best promos in NXT and the match was made for tonight. As has been the case throughout: McAfee has been a great heel, but that doesn't make me want to cheer for Cole, which is holding things back a bit.

Adam Cole vs. Pat McAfee

Cole comes to the ring but we cut to the back where McAfee, with his football players, says he's got this and promises to destroy Cole once and for all. The other players come out with McAfee, though Cole is on his own. Well that's somewhat noble. Cole grabs a headlock to start and McAfee can't do much here. That means Cole can send him into the corner and tease a kick of his own so McAfee asks for a timeout.

Back up and the threat of a superkick sends McAfee outside for some trash talk. Cole follows so the players get in his way, which draws out the rest of the Era. McAfee uses the distraction to go up for the big dive onto everyone, meaning the trash talk is back on. Back in and McAfee slugs away in

the corner as commentary starts being amazed by every single thing McAfee does. A slam, with squats, gets two on Cole and we hit the chinlock. That's broken up after longer than you might expect and Cole gets fired up in the corner.

They slug it out with Cole pulling the shirt over McAfee's head and slugging away before kicking McAfee in the head for two. The shock at the kickout sends Cole up top but Cole shoves him down...with McAfee landing on his feet. Cole is STUNNED and it's even worse when McAfee runs the corner for a top rope superplex into a near fall. Cole's head is hung over the apron so McAfee loads up the punt, which only hits the steps.

Back in and Cole grabs the Figure Four, sending McAfee over to the ropes for the break. Cole goes after him in the corner but a quick low blow puts Cole down. Now the Punt connects for two, sending McAfee up top. That takes too long though (It could have been the MCAFEE BAY BAY!) and Cole superkicks him out of the air, setting up the Panama City Sunrise for the pin at 16:20.

Rating: B-. It isn't really shocking that McAfee was impressive, but I'm not sure people were expecting him to be this athletic. This was a good effort from both and Cole winning is the right call so they didn't go too far. They had a pretty quick feud and while Cole is far from a face so far, it went about as well as could be expected.

Post match Cole looks at McAfee in the corner before turning to the camera to pose.

Drew McIntyre is here and picks Keith Lee to win the main event.

We recap Io Shirai vs. Dakota Kai for Shirai's Women's Title. Kai has been extra evil as of late and is ready to beat Shirai, because she is in her head. That and having the monster Raquel Gonzalez in her corner.

Women's Title: Io Shirai vs. Dakota Kai

Kai is challenging and has Gonzalez with her. Shirai goes with the double leg and starts kicking at Kai's leg, including a dragon screw leg whip on the mat. A Gonzalez distraction lets Kai go after the arm though and wraps it around the arm. Shirai kicks her in the arm sets up an arm trap choke over the ropes and then stomps her down a bit. The armbar goes on, followed by one with Kai's legs.

Shirai gets out and hits a kick to the face, followed by the 619 into a missile dropkick for two. Another armbar is broken up with a kick to the head but Kai breaks up a German suplex and sends her hard into the corner. Shirai is right back up with the running knees in the corner but the moonsault takes too long. Kai gets shoved down though and a double stomp gives Shirai two. The Kairopractor gives Kai two though and we hit the armbar, with Shirai having to get over to the ropes for the break.

Shirai is sat on top for a fireman's carry into a kick to the head for two more with a foot on the ropes saving the title. Kai kicks the referee down by mistake so Gonzalez comes in to plant Shirai, giving Kai two. The Crossface goes on but Gonzalez makes the save. That means a moonsault to the floor to take both of them out, followed by the regular version for the pin to retain the title at 16:12.

Rating: B. Good showing here with both women looking awesome. Gonzalez added a lot here as there is only so much that you can do with Shirai vs. Kai on their own. Shirai is a monster who can destroy Kai on her own but the monster makes things that much more interesting. That turned this into a solid back and forth match and I had a good time with it, which was more than I expected.

Post match Gonzalez goes after Shirai again but Rhea Ripley runs in for the save. The staredown is on but Kai and Gonzalez run.

Damien Priest jumps in a hot tub with some women to celebrate.

NXT UK is back on September 17.

Tommaso Ciampa is back on Wednesday.

We recap Keith Lee vs. Karrion Kross for the NXT Title. Lee won the title at the Great American Bash and Kross didn't seem happy. Kross then choked out Lee's friend Dominick Dijakovic so Lee wanted revenge. That resulted in a fireball to Lee's face to get us slightly away from the Rocky IV theme. Now it's about revenge and the title.

NXT Title: Karrion Kross vs. Keith Lee

Kross, with Scarlett, is challenging and we get the big intro. Lee knocks him straight back to start and unloads with right hands in the corner to put Kross in early trouble. They head to the floor with Kross hammering away but Lee's right hand busts up the Plexiglas by mistake. Lee's arm gets caught on another swing though and the champ is hurt early on. Back in and Kross cranks on the arm (as he should) before putting him down for two. The armbars goes on again but this time Lee powers up.

That's fine with Kross, as he sends the arm into the buckle to put Lee down again. It's a hammerlock to put Lee down on the mat again and Kross cranks on it even harder. With that not working, Kross tries a cross armbreaker so Lee latches his hands together for the block. Lee hits a running splash in the corner and muscles him up for a spinning powerslam into the near fall. Back up and Lee misses a charge in the corner but Kross can't Saito him. Kross can hit a DDT for two but Lee blocks the Saito again.

Lee hits a suplex of his own for a slightly delayed two of his own and they get back up. After what looked to be a little miscommunication, Kross hits a hard clothesline for two more. They slug it out until Lee is knocked to his knee, only to come back with a heck of a clothesline. Kross kicks him in the face and Lee isn't happy. The Grizzly Magnum is blocked though and now the Saito connects for two.

Scarlett is furious about the kickout so the Crossjacket goes on, with Lee's arm almost hitting the mat. A groggy Lee gets over to his stomach and finally makes the rope for the save. Back up and Lee headbutts him in the chest, setting up the Spirit Bomb for two. Lee goes up but Kross catches him with a shot to the arm. The super Doomsday Saito gives Kross

the pin and the title at 21:56.

Rating: B+. This started slowly but they wound up going with what was the best possible choice. Kross would have been dead in the water if he had lost here and Lee is someone who can bounce back from a big loss. They didn't quite go with the hoss battle the whole way but they got it working by the end, which is what matters here. Kross should have won, and I have no idea where Lee goes next. As for who is next for Kross....that Takeover machine Finn Balor sounds like a smart choice no?

Overall Rating: A-. As I've said about Dynamite before, if this is their bad show, they're going to be fine. This wasn't even close to what Takeover can do but it was still a rather good show with nothing resembling a bad match. There were some memorable moments and you can see where some things are going, but it was lacking that show stealer and it stuck out pretty badly.

In addition, there are some things here that make it clear the times have changed. One thing that NXT made look easy was having each match feel different. While they were different matches, there was something off about the last two matches being built around the champion's arm being hurt. It feels like NXT should know better, but maybe that's just the past talking. Still though, very good show, but not up to the old standards.

Results

Finn Balor b. Timothy Thatcher – 1916

Damian Priest won a ladder match – Priest pulled down the title

Adam Cole b. Pat McAfee – Panama City Sunrise

Io Shirai b. Dakota Kai – Moonsault

Karrion Kross b. Keith Lee – Super Doomsday Saito

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