

NXT – December 30, 2020: The Stepping Stone

NXT

Date: December 30, 2020

Location: Capitol Wrestling Center, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Beth Phoenix, Wade Barrett, Vic Joseph

It's finally time to wrap up the year and that can't come soon enough. This is the go home show for next week's New Year's Evil, but we also have a major night in that we are finding out the Year End Award winners. NXT makes these things out to be a big deal and hopefully they continue their trend this year. Let's get to it.

[Here are last week's results if you need a recap.](#)

In memory of Jon Huber/Luke Harper.

Isaiah Scott vs. Bronson Reed

Reed headlocks him down without much trouble to start. Scott gets sent outside and there's a big shoulder off the apron to take him down again. Back in and Scott hits a dropkick to the floor again, setting up a running kick from the apron. That's good for two back inside but Reed pounds him down without much effort. Scott flips out of the corner though and hits an elbow in the corner.

A running dropkick to the leg gives Scott two but Reed is back up to grab him by the throat. Reed headbutts him down a few times and a swinging chokeslam gets two. Scott goes to the ropes so the referee tries to break it up, allowing Scott to sneak in a headbutt. This just annoys Reed though, who runs him over and hits a backsplash. The Tsunami finishes Scott at 6:18.

Rating: C. Not much to this one but I can go for more of Reed being the big unstoppable monster. The Tsunami is one of those spots that is going to work on anyone and it looked awesome here again. I can go for more of Scott as a heel, but maybe he should actually win something of note.

It's time for the first award, with Breakout Star of the Year:

Pat McAfee

Damian Priest

Shotzi Blackheart

Cameron Grimes

Dexter Lumis

Timothy Thatcher

Raquel Gonzalez

Santos Escobar

Ilja Dragunov

Winner: Shotzi Blackheart.

I mean...yeah she has been pushed, but how is this not Grimes, who has been a star, or Priest, who actually won something? There are worse choices, but there are also some far better ones. And no Karrion Kross?

Shotzi talks about how her dad taught her to be a bad*** and she had a great year. Next year is going to be even better.

Earlier today, the Way panicked because Johnny Gargano saw a black cat. He isn't losing again!

Breezango vs. Grizzled Young Veterans

Drake headlocks Breeze down to start but Breeze is back up to

pull on an armbar. It's off to Fandango for a shoulder and an armbar of his own. The chinlock goes on as we're told that the Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic is back in two weeks. It's off to Gibson for the first time and Breeze is driven into the corner. That means Drake can grab a headlock, but Breeze gets over for the tag off to Fandango.

The pace picks up a bit with a sunset flip giving Fandango two. A double kick to the head puts Gibson down but he knocks Fandango off the apron. Breeze takes the Veterans down so Fandango climbs the lighting structure for a dive. Fandango comes up holding his knee though and we take a break.

Back with Fandango still down on the floor until Gibson sends him inside for a dragon screw legwhip. A slam puts Fandango down again with his knee hitting the ropes this time. The knee is healthy enough to kick them to the floor and a crawl through Gibson's legs is enough to bring Breeze back in. Everything breaks down and Breeze gets taken down with a double forearm on the floor. Fandango takes Gibson down with a flip off the steps but Gibson is back up to send him knees first into the steps. That leaves Breeze to walk into Ticket To Mayhem for the pin at 13:00.

Rating: C. The more I think about it, the more obvious it is that Breezango is not a great team around here. They're fine for comedy, but watching them in a thirteen minute match drags a show to a halt. They just aren't that interesting and it shows worse every time. I get why they're here, but can we make the matches a little bit shorter?

Post match Ever-Rise comes out and has the referee hold them back. She's done and walks away, so the Veterans come after them. Ever-Rise walks away.

It's time for Tag Team Of The Year:

Undisputed Era

Breezango

Imperium

Gallus

Legado del Fantasma

Oney Lorcan/Danny Burch

Winner: Undisputed Era.

Can we just name the award after them already?

The Era talks about how awesome they are and this year, it's Adam Cole and Roderick Strong representing the team in the Dusty Cup.

Boa and Xia Li kneel before the master, who puts paint on their heads. They get up and follow the mystery woman through a curtain and into the light. Next week.

Mercedes Martinez vs. Valentina Feroz

Martinez forearms her in the face to start and hits a quick chokeslam. Feroz's sleeper doesn't work and a sunset flip fails even harder. The Air Raid Crash finishes Feroz with ease at 2:12. Martinez looked like a monster.

Post match Martinez says every woman here is on her radar, click click.

It's time for the Female Competitor Of The Year:

Rhea Ripley

Io Shirai

Candice LeRae

Dakota Kai

Kay Lee Ray

Tegan Nox

Winner: Io Shirai.

Like it really could have been anyone else.

Shirai thanks the fans for voting for her and smiles a lot.

Now the Male Competitor Of The Year:

Finn Balor

Adam Cole

Johnny Gargano

Keith Lee

Walter

Tommaso Ciampa

Winner: Adam Cole.

Not much of an argument here, but it's a bit closer than the women's race.

Cole says he told us so but he couldn't do it without the Undisputed Era. As cool as it is to win two of these in a row, Kyle O'Reilly winning the NXT Title next week is going to mean even more.

Pete Dunne vs. Roderick Strong

Strong chops him against the ropes to start as commentary actually brings up their time teaming together in the Dusty Classic in 2018. They run the ropes until Strong hits a clothesline and hammers Dunne down again. Dunne is back with a headlock but Strong slips out and hits the Sick Kick. With nothing else working, Dunne starts in on the fingers and bends

the arm a bit.

Strong is right back with the first backbreaker to send Dunne outside and there's a dropkick through the ropes. We take a break and come back with Dunne grabbing something like Rings of Saturn. That's broken up so Dunne backflips over him out of the corner, only to get caught with a dropkick. Strong scores with a running knee in the corner and the running forearms against the rope has Dunne in more trouble.

The Angle Slam connects for two and Dunne heads outside, where Strong hits a full nelson slam onto the apron. Back in and Dunne counters the butterfly backbreaker into a triangle choke, which is countered into another backbreaker for another two. Strong forearms his way out of another triangle so Dunne kicks him in the face. Dunne finally snaps the fingers and the Bitter End finishes Strong at 13:40.

Rating: B. This was the kind of match you would expect from these two with Dunne absorbing everything Strong could throw at him until the fingers were too much of a weak spot. Dunne is starting to look a bit more like his UK self and that is very good for everyone involved.

It's a big award with Match Of The Year:

Four Way Iron Man Match – Super Tuesday

Finn Balor vs. Kyle O'Reilly – Takeover: 31

Ilja Dragunov vs. Walter – NXT UK TV

Men's WarGames – Takeover: WarGames

Rhea Ripley vs. Charlotte vs. Io Shirai – Takeover: In Your House

Winner: Finn Balor vs. Kyle O'Reilly.

I liked Walter vs. Dragunov better but those two beat the heck

out of each other and this gives them some more steam going into the rematch.

Finn Balor comes up to William Regal, who has the trophies. Balor says Regal can keep his, and he'll give Kyle the award in person.

Balor is on his way to the ring and runs into Pete Dunne, telling him to get in line if he wants a title shot.

Video on the Fight Pit match next week.

Here's Finn Balor to present Kyle O'Reilly with the trophy. Balor says he and O'Reilly had the Match of the Year, with O'Reilly proving that he belonged in this ring. O'Reilly deserves this...and here he comes to claim it. Balor says the award is his because Balor doesn't need it. Instead, he has the NXT Title and three plates in his jaw to remind him of that day. That's cool with O'Reilly, because the trophy means something to him.

It's proof that he belongs here but he isn't going to carry around a participation trophy. This is a reminder that he came up short in the fight of his life. He will do everything to become NXT Champion because it means he has done something in the last fifteen years. Balor says that's great, but he's going to do everything he can to make O'Reilly suffer. He is going to make O'Reilly wish that he (censored) the first time.

Cue Scarlett and Karrion Kross to interrupt and say that what's in the ring belongs to them. It doesn't matter who leaves with the title in seven days because their fate is already sealed. Kross says doomsday is here, tick tock. Damian Priest pops up behind him and hits Kross in the face as the fight is on. The Razor's Edge on the ramp is broken up so Priest headbutts him down the ramp instead.

Kross drives him back first into the lighting structure but they go crashing through the Plexiglas. They fight into the

back and then come through the curtain again with Kross hammering him on some anvil cases. They both crash down and Scarlett REALLY likes what she is seeing. Heck of a brawl here, but the O'Reilly/Balor segment was great.

We get a Rhea Ripley video, talking about how she and Raquel Gonzalez used to be close at the Performance Center. They wanted to be sisters, which Ripley never had before. Now they even have matching RNR tattoos on their fingers. Raquel has changed though and now her ego has grown over Rhea's success. Gonzalez talks about how she is the biggest and baddest woman in NXT and maybe she has been playing this game since the beginning. Ripley doesn't seem to buy it and now they're ready to fight again. That's better backstory than I would have bet on seeing.

Here's Legado del Fantasma in the ring for a chat. Santos Escobar tells them to enjoy the year because it was a great one for the three of them, but especially him. His lack of awards is a sham because he's here to dominate, which is what he has done. William Regal is trying to find the next challenger for the NXT Title because no one can touch him. No one is going to belong in this ring with him because they are the leaders of lucha libre. Cue the Lucha House Party of all people (who somehow have never wrestled on NXT TV) and after some shouting in Spanish, it's lucha time.

Legado del Fantasma vs. Lucha House Party

Escobar offers a quick distraction so Legado can jump them from behind, only to get caught with a double Golden Rewind. A double dropkick to the floor sets up stereo dives and we take a break before the bell. We're joined in progress with Metalik splashing Mendoza for two as Barrett rants about how easy it is to beat the Miz. Dorado comes in but Mendoza gets in a dropkick to the ribs and a running clothesline in the corner.

The chinlock goes on for a bit but Dorado gets up top for a

high crossbody. The hot tag brings in Metalik for a superkick to Mendoza, followed by a reverse Sling Blade. There's the rope walk dropkick for two and a super hurricane drops Mendoza again. Metalik's top rope splash connects with Wilde having to make a save. There's a running hurricanrana to send Wilde to the floor and the inverted hurricanrana plants Mendoza. The rope walk elbow is good for the pin on Mendoza at 3:51.

Rating: C. They packed some nice stuff into the short time that they had, but the important thing here is getting to see some mostly unused main roster names getting a chance in NXT. I have no idea if this lasts beyond tonight but having Lucha House Party here, possibly to go after the Cruiserweight Title, is a good thing. It's not like they're doing anything important on Raw.

Next up is Future Star Of The Year:

Austin Theory

Jake Atlas

Leon Ruff

Kacy Catanzaro

Kayden Carter

Indi Hartwell

Xia Li

A-Kid

Aoife Valkyrie

Pretty Deadly

Winner: Austin Theory.

Given that he wrestled at Wrestlemania, it's kind of hard to

argue against him, especially with Ruff's title win being little more than a joke.

The Way tells Theory to share with Indi Hartwell, who is amazed to find out that the bell is real. Theory mentions the curse so Johnny Gargano throws his protein powder....and breaks a mirror in the process. Then he accidentally walks underneath a ladder.

The final award is the Overall Competitor Of The Year.

Winner: Io Shirai.

She has been champion for a long time and has some awesome matches. What else do you need?

Shirai thanks the fans again.

North American Title: Johnny Gargano vs. Leon Ruff

Ruff is challenging and neither get an entrance. Gargano, with the Way at ringside, headlocks him down to start but gets rolled up for a fast two. A victory roll gets two more on Gargano and sends him outside for a breather. Austin Theory offers a distraction but Gargano misses the slingshot spear anyway. Back in and Ruff chops away but Gargano knocks him off the top and out tot he floor. Ruff gets sent into the barricade, only to have Ruff jump onto the cage barricade and come back off with a hurricanrana. Back in and a neckbreaker drops Ruff again and this time Gargano sends him into the steps.

We take a break and come back with Gargano snapping the arm but Ruff gets two off a backslide. Some crossbodies stagger Gargano and a jumping neckbreaker out of the corner puts him down again. Ruff hits a German suplex into a corkscrew Cannonball for two. A rebound lariat drops Gargano again but he pops back up with a superkick.

The Lawn Dart sets up a low superkick for two on Ruff,

followed by the discus lariat. Gargano powerbombs him into the Gargano Escape, with Ruff going straight to the rope. The Lawn Dart into the barricade is broken up so Ruff goes to the apron for a jumping cutter onto the floor. Back in and the frog splash gives Ruff two so he takes Gargano up top. That's fine with Gargano, who drops him hard face first onto the turnbuckle. One Final Beat breaks the curse at 14:13.

Rating: C+. The lack of drama hurt things a bit here but the action was good, which is what carried this over the finish line. This almost has to be it for Ruff and after as much as he got out of the run with the title, I'm thinking he'll be just fine. Gargano believing in the curse until the ending was a nice touch and the big relief on his face made it that much better.

Dexter Lumis pops up with a bunch of drawings to run down the New Year's Evil card, including Gran Metalik vs. Santos Escobar for the Cruiserweight Title.

Overall Rating: B-. Good show here, but next week is the one that is really going to matter. This week was more about setting things up for New Year's Evil, which is looking like it could be bigger than some Takeovers. If it's anything like a usual big time NXT, they're going to be just fine. This week was a good stepping stone to that, but it was nothing more than a stepping stone.

Results

Bronson Reed b. Isaiah Scott – Tsunami

Grizzled Young Veterans b. Breezango – Ticket To Mayhem to Breeze

Mercedes Martinez b. Valentina Feroz – Air Raid Crash

Pete Dunne b. Roderick Strong – Bitter End

Lucha House Party b. Legado del Fantasma – Rope walk elbow to

Mendoza

Johnny Gargano b. Leon Ruff – One Final Beat

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