

NXT Stand & Deliver 2023: The Fond Farewell?

Stand & Deliver 2023

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Location: Crypto.com Arena, Los Angeles, California

Commentators Vic Joseph, Booker T.

It's probably the biggest NXT show of the year as they get to set the table for tonight's Wrestlemania. This show is solid enough on its own though with multiple title matches, including the closest thing the modern NXT has to a dream match. The main event will see Carmelo Hayes finally challenging Bron Breaker for the NXT Title so let's get to it.

Kickoff Show: Chase U vs. Schism

The winners control Chase University. Chase starts with Fowler and hammers him into the corner so it's off to Reid instead. Hudson tags himself in, which doesn't sit so well. Hail comes in and gets to face the debuting Ava. Or maybe not as Ava hands it off to Gacy, which brings Chase in for the fight. Gacy knocks him down and tries his own spelling stomps, which is going too far for Chase.

With Chase in control, Hail comes back in, meaning Ava has to join her. Ava powers her down but Hail gets in a knockdown. A springboard backsplash connects so Fowler makes the save and comes in to face Bate. Some interference helps put Bate in trouble so he muscles Fowler up into a suplex and dives over for the tag to Chase.

Everything breaks down and Bate is sent to the floor as Hudson FINALLY comes in for the save. Bate hits Bop and Bang on Gacy but Hudson big boots Bate down by mistake. The handspring lariat connects but Gacy Chase makes the save. Schism takes

everyone but Hudson down and Gacy offers him a shirt.

The Chase U shirt comes off (that gets the fans' attention) and the Schism shirt goes on, but the rest of Chase U stands up to fight anyway (that was good). Then Hudson rips off the shirt and the real fight is on, with quadruple Bop and Bangs into quadruple spelling stomps. Bate and Hail hit dives to the floor, setting up the Fratliner to finish Fowler and save the school at 11:16.

Rating: C+. The crowd reaction here was a good sign as the fans have long since wanted to see Chase U get the big win. Hudson changing shirts twice was a heck of a roller coaster sequence and that is what they were trying to have. This should finish off the Schism feud for good and that is not a second too soon. Now get them on to some kind of title feud already, as it is LONG overdue.

The opening video looks at the major matches, with Pretty Deadly throwing in some comments about what we're going to see and how important it is.

Women's Title: Tiffany Stratton vs. Gigi Dolin vs. Roxanne Perez vs. Lyra Valkyria vs. Zoey Stark vs. Indi Hartwell

Perez is defending in a ladder match. The fight is on to start with Perez headscissoring Stark into Stratton in the corner. Perez hammers Valkyria down and low bridges Stark to the floor, setting up the dive on Hartwell. The ladder is picked up but a baseball slide drives it into Perez instead. Dolin tries her own ladder, which is baseball slidden into her as well. Perez and Valkyria get back in and fight over control of a ladder until Perez gets crushed into the corner.

Back up and Valkyria kicks Dolin in the head before suplexing her into the corner. Valkyria starts to go up but gets broken up, with Hartwell getting to kick Stark in the face a few times. Perez cuts off Hartwell from going up and slugs it out with Stratton on the ladder until Hartwell shoves it over.

Dolin is back in with the ladder around the head helicopter spot before sending Valkyria onto a ladder laid up in the corner.

The big ladder is brought in and Perez, after avoiding a ladder being thrown at her, goes up. Stratton is there to cut her off though and both of them get knocked down. Hartwell is back in with a spinebuster to put Stratton on the ladder but gets knocked down by Stark. A ladder is bridged between the big ladder and the corner and Perez gets to make a save. Perez hurricanranas Stratton to the floor and goes up but Dolin makes the save.

Dolin swings her into the standing ladder, setting up the abdominal stretch bomb. Valkyria gets tied in the standing ladder so Dolin can go up, only for Valkyria can pull herself up. Dolin sends Valkyria crashing down but...Jacy Jayne pops up to knock Dolin down onto the bridged ladder. Referees get rid of Jayne so Stratton pops up the ladder, which is pushed over by Hartwell, leaving Stratton to basically Swanton the floor as she lands near some other people. Back inside and Hartwell can't bring herself to climb...but here is Dexter Lumis to help her up and win the title at 17:01.

Rating: B. Are you kidding? After months of Hartwell's "oh well, guess I'm wrestling today, doesn't matter if I do though", she gets the title for the sake of an InDex reunion? I can't imagine Hartwell keeping the title for very long, but after all of the interest that I've lost in her over the last several months, this is really hard to care about.

The rest of the match was your usual multi person ladder match with people crashing all over the place, but thankfully they didn't do anything too crazy. These matches have been done to death but they did things well enough to be a high energy opener that didn't do a lot of the bad things that happens in these things.

Tag Team Titles: Gallus vs. Creed Brothers vs. Tony D'Angelo/Stacks

Gallus is defending and agree to not drink to be ready. Julius, D'Angelo and Coffey start things off with Julius starting fast. It's quickly off to Stacks, who gets small packaged and slammed down. Everything breaks down and the Creeds take over on the floor as UFC Hall of Famer Daniel Cormier approves from the crowd.

Back in and Mark knees Brutus and decks D'Angelo, allowing Wolfgang to get the tag. Wolfgang and D'Angelo slug it out until Brutus hands it back to Julius for a bunch of suplexes into nips (cool sequence). Stacks comes back in to run some people over until he gets sent to the apron.

Mark picks Stacks up on his shoulders...so Julius lifts BOTH of them onto his shoulders for a double electric chair (albeit as they hold the ropes but still). Brutus comes off the top and completely misses the Brutus Ball (the fans could tell too) and everyone crashes down before they go back inside. D'Angelo clotheslines Wolfgang to the floor and a double spinebuster drops Mark to give Stacks two...as Joe Coffey returns to make the save. Gallus' fireman's carry flapjack/big boot combination finishes Stacks at 8:15 to retain.

Rating: C+. This was a step down from the opener and the ending was all about the big Joe Coffey return. Aside from that (and the not so great, yet still impressive) electric chair spot, it was pretty much your run of the middle triple threat match. There isn't much you can do with that standard formula and while it was a fine way to get the teams on the show, it wasn't exactly great.

Pretty Deadly wants to interview Bron Breaker...but decide to give him his space instead.

We recap the North American Title match. Champion Wes Lee wants the best so he has requested four challengers (cut down

from ten), meaning Wes got to pick his opponents to get us here.

North American Title: Wes Lee vs. Dragon Lee vs. JD McDonagh vs. Axiom vs. Ilja Dragunov

Wes is defending and it's one fall to a finish. McDonagh and Dragunov go outside to start with Wes sending Dragon out there soon after. Wes takes Axiom down but McDonagh and Dragunov are back in for the rapid fire chops. Dragon breaks that up and takes them both down into the corners for the running dropkicks.

We settle down (kind of) to Dragon vs. Axiom with Dragon knocking him outside for the big running flip dive. Wes is back in to strike away at Dragon, setting up a basement dropkick to the back of the head. Dragunov comes in to go after Wes, who sends him straight into the corner. McDonagh comes back in and takes over until Wes knocks him to the apron. That just means a moonsault onto Dragunov and Axiom on the floor.

Back in and the Devil Inside hits Wes but Dragunov grabs the referee's arm at two. Everyone but Wes goes after McDonagh to take him out, leaving all five down. Most of them get back up and it's Dragunov getting to clean house, including the Constantine Special (619 into a clothesline) to Axiom. Dragunov (bleeding a bit from the forehead) clotheslines Wes and then Death Valley Drivers him into Dragon in the corner.

Axiom is back up and sends Dragunov outside for the moonsault onto Dragunov and McDonagh. Dragon ties Wes' knee up in the ropes and hits a big top rope double stomp to take him out. Back in and Axiom beats up Dragunov and McDonagh but Dragon makes the save. Dragunov powerbombs Axiom onto the other two and covers all three, with Wes diving in for the save. Axiom kicks Wes out of the air and Dragunov blasts Dragon with a knee.

Wes makes the save and moonsaults onto Dragunov for two of his own. McDonagh is back up to Rock Bottom Axiom onto Dragon for two but Axiom manages the springboard moonsault DDT to drop McDonagh for two more. With McDonagh on the apron, Axiom hurricanranas him onto Wes but Dragunov superplexes Axiom from the apron to the ring for two, with the Lees making the save. Dragunov gets caught between Dragon and Wes but manages to kick his way out of trouble. The Torpedo hits Dragon, only to have Wes hit the Cardiac Kick on Dragunov at the same time for the retaining pin at 19:19.

Rating: B. This was the kind of action and drama packed match that you would have expected, as it was all about people coming in and making saved and going for a bunch of falls. The good thing is that multiple people were real options to take the title but Wes gets to retain to look even better. What felt like it could have been a nothing reign coming in has turned into one of the best the title has had and has elevated Wes to a much higher level. Pretty sweet match here and it didn't need all of the shenanigans or violence.

Pretty Deadly (in different clothes) want to talk to Carmelo Hayes but can't decide which knock to use. Trick Williams pops up to say leave them alone. Hayes is ready to win the title though.

We recap Grayson Waller vs. Johnny Gargano. Waller is a disrespectful jerk and wanted to face Shawn Michaels. Instead, Michaels brought back Gargano to fight for NXT. Then Waller made it personal, so this is unsanctioned.

Video on Gargano, in case you forgot/have never seen him around here.

Johnny Gargano vs. Grayson Waller

Unsanctioned and Gargano jumps him before the bell to send it outside. Waller twists the knee around so Waller can go yell at Vic Joseph. Back up and Gargano unloads with trashcan shots

to the back, with a big one sending Waller to the floor. The big dive is cut off by the trashcan lid though and Waller sets up a bunch of chairs at ringside. They'll be for later though as Waller takes him inside for a buckle bomb.

Gargano is back up and suplexes Waller over the top and onto the chairs for the nasty crash. It's time to set up a table, allowing Waller to get in his own shot. Sweet Chin Music is loaded up but Gargano knocks him to the floor. Waller drives him hard into the apron to take over but can't follow up after the crash. Gargano takes too long going after the table, allowing Waller to hit his rolling Stunner.

They slug it out back inside with Waller taking over, including some kendo stick shots. Waller goes over to Candice LeRae and Gargano's son, which is too far for Gargano. With the baby handed off, Gargano fights back and Candice jumps the barricade to beat on Waller with the stick.

Back in and One Final Beat gets two and Waller fights back again. A Van Terminator into a trashcan (there's one of your big spots) gets two on Gargano and Waller isn't happy. They go back to the floor where Waller puts him on the announcers' table, only to take FOREVER to go up top. That lets Gargano pelt a chair at him and start hammering away again. Waller manages a quick rolling Stunner for two and yells a lot, only to get hit low. Gargano unloads with a chair over and over until the Gargano Escape finishes Waller at 18:19.

Rating: B-. This is what it should have been, as Waller is more about the hype and talk than what he can do in the ring (where he's good enough). On the other hand you have Gargano, who is one of if not the most successful NXT star ever. Gargano stood up for NXT and beat down the loudmouth who kept running the place down. Waller is going to be fine after the loss and can talk his way right back to where he was. For now though, Gargano gets another nice moment, which is what he has been needing in recent months.

Post match InDex comes out for the big Way reunion.

Stacks is upset about losing but Tony D'Angelo says it's ok. Pretty Deadly comes in to mock them and a big fight breaks out.

Women's Tag Team Titles: Fallon Henley/Kiana James vs. Isla Dawn/Alba Fyre

Henley and James, with Brooks Jensen and Josh Briggs, are defending. It's a brawl on the floor to start before they head inside. Fyre trips Finlay from the floor so the villains can take over, with Fyre's superkick getting two. Henley manages a knockdown though and it's James coming in to clean house.

A belly to back gets two on Fyre and it's back to Henley, who gets choked by Dawn in the corner. James trying to break it up only makes things worse but Henley fights out anyway. A middle rope Blockbuster gives Henley two and everything breaks down. James is sent outside but pulls Dawn out with her.

Back in and a powerbomb/missile dropkick combination gets two on Fyre with Dawn making the save. Fyre gordbusters James and Dawn comes in for a double superkick and a near fall. Everyone is down and James tells Jensen to give her the purse. Briggs says no and the distraction lets Dawn and Fyre take the champs down. A Backstabber/Swanton combination to James gives us new champions at 8:42.

Rating: B-. This was a good bit better than I was expecting as they brought the energy throughout. They also got the ending right, as changing the titles was the only way to go here. Henley vs. James in a showdown is all but guaranteed and now they have cleared away the big thing that was holding it back. Solid stuff here, as Fyre FINALLY wins something in NXT (not UK).

We recap Carmelo Hayes vs. Bron Breaker for the NXT Title. Breaker is unstoppable but Hayes has been successful against

everyone else. This is treated as a dream match and I can actually see that for once.

NXT Title: Bron Breaker vs. Carmelo Hayes

Trick Williams handles Carmelo's entrance, saying he needs the fans to stand so Hayes can deliver. Hayes makes sure he is completely beloved here by having a Lakers themed entrance. After the Big Match Intros we're ready to go, with Hayes not being able to get anywhere with a power attempt. With that not working, Hayes tries to pick up the pace but his springboard is knocked out of the air.

Breaker grabs a front facelock and lifts Hayes up in quite the power display. Hayes sends him into the corner for the break and stomps away, setting up a springboard clothesline for two. The Fujiwara armbar goes on to keep Breaker down until the power helps him get back up. A shoulder gives Breaker two and he tries a torture rack, only to have Trick pull Hayes to the ropes.

That's enough for an ejection and Breaker uses the distraction to flip dive onto both of them. Back in and Hayes hits a pump kick into a pretty sweet springboard suplex (Breaker was standing on the bottom rope and Hayes bounced off the middle rope to pull him in. Hayes goes up so Breaker jumps to the top and Frankensteiner's him down. They pull themselves up and slug it out in the middle with Breaker getting the better of things.

The Steiner Recliner is blocked though and Hayes pulls him into a Crossface. That doesn't last long either so Breaker hits the spear...right into the referee. Now the Recliner goes on to make Hayes tap but there's no referee. Trick is back with a belt shot to Breaker for a rather close two. Breaker tries the gorilla press but Hayes switches into a Codebreaker. Nothing But Net gives Hayes the pin and the title at 16:15.

Rating: B+. I liked this one a lot as it felt like a main

event level match between two guys who were working well beyond their experience level. Hayes even won close to clean, as Breakker kicked out of the belt shot and Hayes beat him on his own after that. Hayes has been ready to be the guy around here and there is a long list of people who could defend against right off the bat. Heck of a match and a worthy main event

Post match Breakker glares at Trick and then hands Hayes the title in a show of respect. That feels quite a bit like a goodbye from Breakker and it's not like he has anything else to do around here anyway.

Overall Rating: B+. This was getting into the same feeling of a Takeover (it's not THAT good but it's getting there) with nothing bad, wrestlers doing better than you might have expected, and the very good matches in different parts of the card. I had a rather good time with this and it's probably the best NXT show since the original was blown up. They certainly, ahem, delivered here.

Results

Chase U b. Schism – Fratliner to Reid

Indi Hartwell b. Zoey Stark, Tiffany Stratton, Roxanne Perez, Lyra Valkyria and Gigi Dolin – Hartwell pulled down the title

Gallus b. Creed Brothers and Tony D'Angelo/Stacks – Fireman's carry flapjack/big boot combination to Stacks

Wes Lee b. Dragon Lee, JD McDonagh, Axiom and Ilja Dragunov – Cardiac Kick to Dragunov

Johnny Gargano b. Grayson Waller – Gargano Escape

Isla Dawn/Alba Fyre b. Fallon Henley/Kiana James – Swanton/Codebreaker combination to James

Carmelo Hayes b. Bron Breakker – Nothing But Net

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