

NXT – December 19, 2023: Try Again Next Week

NXT

Date: December 19, 2023

Location: Capitol Wrestling Center, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Vic Joseph, Booker T.

We're closing in on New Year's Evil and the two big title matches are already set. There are some other things that need to be followed up on as well though and we might find out a few of them this week. This is a taped show, which can take away some of the energy that is usually around. Let's get to it.

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

Fallon Henley vs. Tiffany Stratton

They start fast with Henley knocking her outside to keep up the beating. Back in and Henley elbows her in the corner but gets knocked out to the floor in a big crash. Stratton gets to beat on her a bit as well but Henley rains down some right hands in the corner. A hurricanrana takes Stratton down again, only to have her come back with a spinebuster for two. They go to a pinfall reversal sequence...and Henley gets a sunset flip for the completely clean pin at 3:51.

Rating: C. I've been wanting Henley to get a better push for a long time now and she might just be getting that here. That's by far the biggest win of her career and I could go for her getting to do some more in the future. It's nice to see some fresh blood in the division and Henley is pretty much set for a long time around here anyway so the loss won't hurt her.

Post match Stratton jumps her and drags Henley to the back. Stratton rubs a mop over her face and covers her with garbage

in a rather mean moment.

Trick Williams congratulates Carmelo Hayes on his Smackdown win but they talk about who actually attacked Hayes last week. Hayes suggests they turn the New Year's Evil match into a triple threat match but Williams doesn't get the thinking. That doesn't seem to be happening, though Hayes says it doesn't matter who wins as long as they have the title. Williams: "It does matter." Williams hopes it's cool and Hayes seems to be ok, though some of the enthusiasm is lacking.

Here is Ilja Dragunov to talk about how he doesn't know how he got in the middle of this Trick Williams/Carmelo Hayes mess. He didn't have that on his 2023 Bingo card, but he'll start 2024 by defeating Williams, no matter how popular he is. Cue Ridge Holland to interrupt, saying he needs to prove himself again in NXT. Holland wants Dragunov to help him get there, perhaps by winning the NXT Title. He isn't going to beg for a title shot so he wants to prove himself. He'll face everyone to get to Dragunov, and then he'll be worthy of a shot. Dragunov is tired of all this so he'll face Holland tonight.

Lexis King knows he's already the breakout star around here, but he'll win the Breakout Tournament if he has to.

Trick Williams doesn't like Ilja Dragunov giving away title shots but Dragunov says he's the champ so get over it. Makes sense.

Breakout Tournament First Round: Dion Lennox vs. Lexis King

King wastes no time in taking him into the corner for a running clothesline. A knee to the ribs keeps Lennox in trouble but he fights back with some shots to the face. King heads outside where he grabs the contract and tries to grab the contract. That's not going to work for Lennox, who takes King back inside, where the Coronation gives King the quick win at 2:57.

Post match Tre Bearhill chases King off.

Eddy Thorpe talks about his feud with Dijak and wants to settle it in NXT Underground.

Jacy Jayne/Thea Hail vs. Kiana James/Izzi Dame

Riley Osborne is leading the cheers in the Chase U student section as Jayne takes Dame into the corner. A rollup gives Dame two as Hail is very fired up on the apron. Dame clotheslines her way out of trouble and hands it off to James for some knees to the ribs. It's back to Dame or another clothesline but Jayne gets in her own shot, meaning it's the hot tag off to Hail. House is quickly cleaned, including a springboard bottom rope backplash for two. Osborne approves as Hail Kimuras James...but Dame came in off a blind tag. A big boot finishes Hail at 3:51.

Rating: C. The idea of Hail having a crush on Osborne and her excitement messing with her attention is an interesting way to go and I'm curious to see where that goes. James and Dame aren't the greatest team but at least they have been together for a few weeks now and could be built up with some kind of a business relationship. Not exactly a great match but at least they kept it moving.

Roxanne Perez is annoyed at Kiana James and Izzi Dame and gets in a fight with Arianna Grace over them.

Andre Chase is gambling with OTM and wins a lot of money, but offers to put up the money double or nothing over a tag match between Chase U and OTM next week. Scripts says as a bonus, if OTM wins, they get a Tag Team Title match, which they can apparently authorize. The D'Angelo Family's associate comes in and says everything is on. Hudson doesn't look convinced and Chase doesn't seem to have the best idea.

North American Title: Dragon Lee vs. ???

Lee is defending against a to be determined member of the No Quarter Catch Crew, but here is Gallus to interrupt, with Joe Coffey saying he wants in on this too. Works for Lee.

North American Title: Dragon Lee vs. Joe Coffey vs. Charlie Dempsey

Lee is defending and gets sent to the apron to start. Back in and Coffey throws Lee but misses a middle rope elbow. Dempsey gets headbutted own but Gallus' distraction earns them an ejection. Coffey grabs a suplex on Lee and we take a break. Back with Lee grabbing a hurricanrana and knocking Dempsey into the corner. Dempsey fights up and drops Lee but has to slug it out with Coffey.

With Coffey getting the better of things, he goes up top but gets uppercutted out of the air. That leaves Dempsey to suplex Coffey, who is suplexing Lee at the same time. Back up and Lee DDTs Dempsey but gets headbutted into the corner for two more. Dempsey is knocked outside so Lee can knee Coffey in the head for two. Lee is knocked to the floor this time so Coffey hits a dive...as a smiling Joe Gacy pops out from underneath the ring. Gacy pulls Coffey under the ring, leaving Dempsey to tabletop suplex Lee for two. Lee is able to come back with Operation Dragon to retain at 12:12.

Rating: C+. The action was good and they had an exciting enough match, but I'm not a fan of just throwing someone in there to make it into a triple threat. It felt like they were just adding something for the sake of adding it to make it different. Lee getting wins is a good thing, but have him beat one of the Catch Crew and then one of Gallus in separate matches rather than changing what they announced in the first place.

Post match Gacy runs off but the No Quarter Catch Crew jump Lee. Cue the LWO for the save.

Trick Williams rants to Carmelo Hayes about Ridge Holland

because if he wins, it might make New Year's Evil a triple threat. Hayes: "Someone should have thought of that!" They need a way to take the title from Dragunov.

Cora Jade announces her return to the women's locker room and takes over Karmen Petrovic's locker. With Jade gone, Petrovic comes in and isn't pleased. Gigi Dolin tells her to go after Jade.

Breakout Tournament First Round: Luca Crusifino vs. Tavion Heights

Heights, the amateur wrestler, takes Luca down without much trouble and then suplexes him for a fast two. A neckbreaker gives Luca the same and another neckbreaker gets another two. Back up and Heights grabs a powerslam, followed by a spinning belly to belly for the pin at 3:27.

Rating: C. These two have been on NXT LVL Up for months now and it is clear that Heights is someone WWE wants to push in a big way down the line. He's one heck of an athlete and has the amateur wrestling background which should take him a pretty long way. At the same time you have Luca, who has an interesting gimmick with the wrestling lawyer deal, but then he doesn't really do anything with it and that stops having any kind of an impact.

Video on Lyra Valkyria vs. Blair Davenport, focusing on their paths here, with Valkyria fighting the right way and Davenport doing anything to get to the top. They meet in two weeks at New Year's Evil.

Valkyria is ready when Nikkita Lyons comes in to say she'll deal with Tatum Paxley for Valkyria, but she wants the Women's Title too.

The Meta Four is happy this season because Noam Dar isn't scared of Josh Briggs.

Nikkita Lyons vs. Tatum Paxley

Lyons takes her to the floor to start and fires off the chops until Paxley sends her hand into the steps. Back in and Paxley is right back on the arm, including a Fujiwara armbar. That's broken up and Lyons kicks her in the head, setting up the running hip attack in the corner. Something like a German suplex puts Paxley down again and a kick to the chest makes it worse. Lyons hits the splits splash for the pin at 3:20.

Rating: C. Well that happened. Paxley did something interesting last week when she went after Lyra Valkyria but then got wrecked by Lyons here. Whatever she had last week is more or less squashed immediately, which isn't the most thrilling development. Lyons is back and seems ready to move into the title picture, but I can't get my head around how ridiculous her new gear looks. It's like some genie outfit that didn't get finished and it's a big distraction.

Hank Walker and Tank Ledger are ready for Gallus.

Fallon Henley is livid at Tiffany Stratton, who has never had to work a day in her life. Henley swears revenge and storms off. Josh Briggs is ready for his Heritage Cup Title match but asks to do it on his own. Jensen isn't thrilled but agrees.

Tank Ledger/Hank Walker vs. Gallus

Hank works on Mark's arm to start but it's quickly off to Wolfgang so Walker comes in to work on the arm. Wolfgang gets sent into the corner for a splash but tags out and offers a fast distraction. Walker is knocked out to the floor and comes up holding his shoulder, meaning Wolfgang has a target. Back in and Mark gets kicked away, allowing Ledger to tag himself in, but the referee says no because he was WAY too far down the apron. Therefore no tag, meaning Mark can kick Walker in the face for the pin at 3:59.

Rating: C. That's certainly points for a creative ending, as I

wouldn't have thought of that happening in WWE, even if it is by the standard rules of wrestling. I'm really not seeing it with Ledger and Walker, as their every man deal isn't working. Gallus isn't exactly great, but they're the better option here and could be put back into the title hunt sooner than later.

Joe Gacy is watching Gallus from the Chase U student section.

Dijak is in for NXT Underground against Eddy Thorpe.

Tiffany Stratton calls Fallon Henley a servant in society and swears Henley will NEVER be her. Henley will always be trash, so they can fight at New Year's Evil. When Stratton wins, Henley can become her servant.

Here's what's coming on various shows.

Ridge Holland vs. Ilja Dragunov

Non-title. Dragunov's running shoulders stagger Holland but his running shoulder puts Dragunov down. A hard clothesline drops Dragunov again but he's back up with some hard chops in the corner. An Alabama Slam drops Dragunov, who shrugs it off and rolls some German suplexes.

We take a break and come back with Holland striking away to take over, including a clothesline to knock Dragunov out of the corner. A suplex is countered into a DDT and the H Bomb knocks Holland silly. Holland gets in another shot of his own and tries a suplex but settles for something like a DDT. Hold on though as Dragunov is badly shaken up and the referee calls in the medics, with the match being stopped at about 10:30.

Rating: B-. They were having a good match here and then they went with the rather scary ending. Having what is hopefully a storyline injury in a match is one thing, having a neck injury from the hands of Holland is quite another when he might have accidentally ended Big E.'s career in the same way. I'm really not a fan of this and while the crowd reacted very well, that

doesn't necessarily make it a good idea.

The arena goes silent as Dragunov is taken out on a stretcher, with the title being laid on him, and he is wheeled out to end the show. Of note: this has been reported to be a storyline injury rather than a legitimate injury.

Overall Rating: C. Ignoring everything at the end, this was a rather flat episode with nothing that stood out, save for the surprise of Henley beating Stratton in a heck of an upset. Other than that though, you had a few matches featuring rookies or lower level talent, which didn't make for the most entertaining show. Granted it was a taped show, but that didn't exactly make for a good week. We have another of these next week and that's not exactly compelling after this less than stellar effort.

Results

Fallon Henley b. Tiffany Stratton – Sunset flip

Lexis King b. Dion Lennox – Coronation

Kiana James/Izzi Dame b. Jacy Jayne/Thea Hail – Big boot to Hail

Dragon Lee b. Joe Coffey and Charlie Dempsey – Operation Dragon to Dempsey

Tavion Heights b. Luca Crusifino – Spinning belly to belly

Nikkita Lyons b. Tatum Paxley – Splits splash

Gallus b. Tank Ledger/Hank Walker – Jumping kick to Walker

Ilja Dragunov vs. Ridge Holland went to a no content when Dragunov was injured

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