

NXT – March 9, 2016: The NXT Marathon

NXT

Date: March 9, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

It's a special show tonight as we're back at Full Sail but also getting to find out who will be facing Finn Balor in Dallas for the NXT Title at Takeover. Sami Zayn and Samoa Joe both won a triple threat match but then drew in a singles match. Therefore tonight it's a 2/3 falls match, though the result may have been spoiled with Sami appearing on Raw earlier this week. Let's get to it.

Quick video on Joe vs. Zayn.

Opening sequence.

Here's William Regal to get things going with a quick announcement: since Baron Corbin attacked Austin Aries last week, the two of them will be facing off at Takeover: Dallas. Simple and to the point again. He wraps it up by saying we'll be getting a conclusive #1 contender tonight.

Samoa Joe vs. Sami Zayn

2/3 falls and we get big match intros. Joe teases a kick to the head to start before taking him down into an armbar. Sami reverses into a wristlock and rollup for two but Joe drives him into the corner. The referee actually stops to lecture them about wanting a clean break which suggests that they have a lot of time to work with here. Joe takes him back down with a hard headlock as the announcers actually keep up with the time frame by saying Joe had Monday off while Sami was on Raw.

The headlock eats up a lot of time until Sami reverses and armdrags Joe into an armbar. La Majistral gets two for Sami but Joe lights up his chest with a chop. Another armdrag sends Joe to the floor but he's still

smart enough to be out of the way before Sami can launch the dive. We take a break and come back with Joe kicking at Sami's chest to take over. Joe grabs an arm trap chinlock for a bit, followed by a running boot to the face in the corner. The fans start to get behind Sami as we're treated to his amazing selling.

Sami gets in a kick to the chest but charges into a belly to belly. More hard forearms to the head have Sami in trouble until he comes back with a hard clothesline in a rare power display. Joe's corner enziguri gets two and a backsplash is good for the same. Sami can't get a Koji Clutch so Joe plants him with a powerslam for two. Another break gets us past the twenty minute mark and we come back to see Joe hammering him down in the corner again.

Joe takes out the legs but gets sent to the floor, allowing Sami to get in a slingshot moonsault for the first really big spot. Back in and a high cross body gives Sami a rare near fall, only to have Joe turn him inside out with a clothesline. The corner Rock Bottom sets up the MuscleBuster to give Joe the first fall at 27:56.

We take another break and come back with Sami fighting out of another MuscleBuster attempt, only to have Joe ram him into the buckle a few times. Sami dropkicks him for a breather but the referee breaks it up because Joe is busted open. The distraction lets Joe go nuts with strikes to knock Sami across the ring. We get a kickout at two with some bonus yelling so Joe puts on a chinlock. Joe misses a knee drop and gets rolled up for two.

That's about it for Sami right now as Joe sends him outside and drives Sami into the steps for a long nine count. An STO on the floor gives Joe another nine count and now it's time for Sami's comeback with forearms and a suplex which takes quite a bit of muscle. Joe rolls outside for Sami's flip dive and a quick Koji Clutch ties us up at 38:37.

We take another break and come back with Sami getting two off a Blue Thunder Bomb but both guys are spent. Joe loads up what looked like a superplex but Sami sunset bombs him down for two. With Joe heading outside for a breather, Sami brings back the dive through the ropes into

a tornado DDT for a long nine count. The Helluva Kick is countered into a powerbomb into a Boston crab into a crossface into a modified Rings of Saturn. Sami gets his foot on the ropes for the break as we hit 50:00.

Joe waits for Sami to get up and starts in with the strikes, including a hard set of kicks to the head. Sami is crumpled in a ball on the mat before popping to his feet. This time it's Sami putting Joe in the Koquina Clutch but Joe rolls over and puts his foot on the ropes for the break, just like Sami did earlier. The exploder suplex into the corner sets up the Helluva Kick but Joe steps aside and grabs the real Koquina Clutch, making Sami pass out for the win at 54:08.

Rating: A. Well that worked. Seriously what else do you want me to say? Two guys just fought for nearly an hour and it was one great stretch after another. The only minor issue was Sami being on Raw earlier in the week to spoil this a bit but I think I can live with that one. Joe needed this one as he now has a big signature win on his record and looks on fire going into Dallas where things really could go either way. Great match here and a great way to spend an evening.

Overall Rating: A+. Here's the thing that pushed this one over the top for me: before and during the match, the announcers talked about American Alpha, Carmella and Bayley being scheduled for tonight. Once we hit about forty minutes in, they said those things would have to be rescheduled. That's something you so rarely get in wrestling today: the announcers acting like this is real.

It wasn't a big main event that started with a few minutes left and happened to fit perfectly into their schedule. Instead, this match went on long enough that it changed what they had planned because this wasn't what they expected. It breaks away from the perfect structure that you're so often stuck with on most wrestling programming and that's very refreshing for a change.

Results

Samoa Joe b. Sami Zayn – Koquina Clutch

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book of the Complete Monday Nitro Reviews Volume IV at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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NXT – March 2, 2016: An Old Friend

NXT

Date: March 2, 2016

Location: CFE Arena, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

It's a big night for NXT as we have a past great name coming in to face off with NXT Champion Finn Balor on the finale of the Orlando tapings with Neville coming back for one night only. In addition to that we're getting closer to the big showdown in a 2/3 falls match next week with Sami Zayn vs. Samoa Joe for the #1 contendership. Let's get to it.

We open with a quick video on Balor vs. Neville later tonight.

Opening sequence.

Hugo Knox/Tucker Knight vs. Vaudevillains

Knox is rather tattooed which I don't remember about him last time he got squashed. A dropkick puts Aiden in the corner but he quickly takes over and brings in Gotch for a chinlock. The announcers mention the

Vaudevillains being up to their old ways to confirm their heel turn, which is probably the best move for a team called the VILLAINS. English kicks away and it's back to Gotch for another chinlock on Knox. Everything breaks down and the Whirling Dervish pins Knight at 3:33.

Rating: D+. Just a squash here with the Vaudevillains being back as the heels they should have been all along. I don't think they have much of a chance of getting back to the title picture but a feud with the Hype Bros feels like an older feud where the announcers just start talking about how they're having issues, setting up a big match later. Yeah they fought once but it was hardly anything huge. We don't need to have them come out here and fight or stare at each other every week. It worked back then so let's try it again today. It just might work better than having them fight over and over until people get sick of them.

Emma and Dana Brooke aren't impressed with women like Deonna Purrazzo and promise to win tonight.

Finn Balor video.

We look back at Dash Wilder/Scott Dawson attacking Enzo Amore outside the Performance Center until Big Cass made the save.

Enzo and Cass promise to stand over Dawson and Wilder as Tag Team Champions.

Dawson and Wilder (now collectively known as the Revival) blame Enzo and Cass for the attack.

Enzo/Cass vs. Revival for the Tag Team Titles at Roadblock.

Emma vs. Santana Garrett

Garrett used to be Brittany in TNA. Emma sends her into the buckle to start and pounds her into a butterfly suplex. There's a move you don't see very often anymore. Some kicks to the back (there's a more popular one) has Santana in trouble and another big kick stops a comeback bid. We hit the double arm crank as this has been one sided so far. Now we get the real comeback as Santana gets in a Russian legsweep, only to have Emma crotch her on top. Something like a curb stomp sets up the Emma Lock

for the tap out at 5:38.

Rating: D+. Another glorified squash here with Emma getting to look good, even if there's little for someone on her level to do. Asuka vs. Bayley is going to be the big feud for the next month and I don't see anyone outside of Nia Jax being the next big challenger for whoever survives there. Emma has gotten better in the ring but I'd rather she be on her own as Brooke really doesn't add all that much.

William Regal tells Eva Marie and Nia Jax that they'll be facing Bayley and Asuka at some point in the near future.

Regal is in the ring after a break and introduces the latest talent acquisition: Austin Aries. The fans and announcers are WAY into this but Baron Corbin jumps Aries during his entrance and lays him out with the End of Days on the floor. Corbin to Regal: "AN EYE FOR AN EYE!"

Elias Samson vs. Steve Cutler

Cutler seems to annoy Samson for some reason and gets punched in the face for his efforts. Maybe he didn't drop a dollar in the guitar case. A suplex and some elbow drops have Steve crawling on the mat but Samson stops for some air guitar. Samson's quick neckbreaker is enough for the pin at 3:03.

Rating: D+. I could go for something other than a squash at this point as they haven't been filling up the extra time with good promos like in the old NWA formula. Samson is turning into more than I was expecting but he still needs a big win over someone to take that next step. I don't know how well he's going to do and I'd call him a longshot at the moment but anything is better than jobbing like he did for all those months.

The Hype Bros are glad they lost the first match to the Vaudevillains and think they should take them out early. The Vaudevillains are listening and smile.

Neville video.

Finn Balor vs. Neville

Non-title and they have a ton of time here. It's a battle of the wristlocks to start with neither guy being able to get very far. Finn's headlock only works for a few moments and it's Neville smacking him in the face with a dropkick. Now it's Neville working on the headlock until he drops Finn with a hard kick to the ribs. Neville doesn't seem to know what to do against Balor so he kicks Finn down another time and we take a break.

Back with the fans getting behind Finn to get him out of a chinlock as Neville is the default heel here. Finn gets up again and catches a charging Neville with a backdrop over the top, sending him head first onto the steps to really wake up the crowd. Neville pops to his feet though and sends Balor outside for a great looking moonsault. It's time for another chinlock but Balor gets up with a great looking Pele to stagger Neville.

Some kicks (hard ones too) get near falls on Neville but he comes right back with the rapid fire kicks and a pair of German suplexes. The Red Arrow is broken up with a running enziguri and Balor hits the big flip dive to put Neville down on the floor. That's still not enough for the Coup de Grace though as Neville crotches him again.

Neville has to bail out of the Red Arrow though and gets caught in a Sling Blade for a VERY close two. They're trading bombs here and the fans are getting more and more into it every time. Balor dropkicks him into the corner and nails the Coup de Grace, followed by Bloody Sunday for the pin at 18:40.

Rating: B+. This was a great chess game as Neville was way too cocky to start until he got serious and had to trade big shots with Balor, who he seemed to underestimate early on. People forget how good Neville can be when he's doing stuff besides high spots and that's what we got here: a long wrestling match built around high spots but still with enough wrestling and storytelling to keep the fans hooked from bell to bell.

They shake hands and applaud each other post match.

Joe says next week should be easy and calls Sami Zayn ungrateful. Sami thinks Joe is trying to come in here and take whatever he wants at Sami's

expense. Joe gets in his face and brings up saving Sami from Kevin Owens. That was Joe saving his career but next week he's taking it away. I'm really digging this stuff with the interviews hyping up a match from next week to close out the show. So many times Raw is wrapped up to end the week and it gets annoying.

Overall Rating: C+. It's really hard to have a single match save a show but that's what they did here. This was a bunch of nothing until two guys got to spend nearly a third of the show beating each other up and showing how great the in ring product around here really can be. Really fun main event here and it actually makes up for the uninteresting stuff that got us here.

Results

Vaudevillains b. Hugh Knox/Tucker Knight – Whirling Dervish to Knight

Emma b. Santana Garrett – Emma Lock

Elias Samson b. Steve Cutler – Neckbreaker

Finn Balor b. Neville – Bloody Sunday

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NXT – February 24, 2016: Maybe Next Time

NXT

Date: February 24, 2016

Location: CFE Arena, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

As has been the case recently, this is going to be about fallout from last week and the main event in particular. Last week, Samoa Joe and Sami Zayn went to a double pin in a match for the #1 contendership, meaning we don't have a challenger for Finn Balor. Odds are that won't be established tonight either but odds are we'll get a fun show out of it anyway. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

American Alpha vs. Blake and Murphy

Gable and Murphy get things going with Chad easily taking him down into a leg lock. The good guys start in on the arm as Corey talks about Chad being able to dribble a bowling ball. Blake comes in and is quickly ridden down to the mat. Some rapid fire dropkicks (and a Ricky Morton reference) has the bad guys in trouble as Chad waits in the middle. A double dropkick puts Blake on the floor and we take a break.

Back with Jordan staying on the arm and Gable doing the same. You don't often see the good guys in control this long. Blake's slam doesn't get him away from the armbar but the heels FINALLY get him into the corner to take over. We hit a chinlock on Gable for a bit before it's back to Blake for forearms to the head.

A double arm crank keeps things slow and the heels keep pulling Gable away from the hot tag. You can only do that so many times before it stops working though and the hot tag brings in Jordan for the series of suplexes. Murphy's dropkick is swatted away and the Grand Amplitude puts Blake away at 13:37. That's a long match for a non-main event in NXT.

Rating: C+. Nice match here even though it was a glorified squash until the ending. American Alpha is clearly the real deal and ready to give the titles some much needed energy. Blake and Murphy on the other hand have smacked their heads against the glass ceiling and I'm really not sure where they're supposed to go from here.

We look back at the ending to last week's show.

Regal says we'll be seeing Sami vs. Joe in a 2/3 falls match in two weeks. As for next week though, there's a new talent debuting.

Elias Samson song.

Christopher Girard vs. Apollo Crews

Girard is indy star Biff Busick in his NXT debut. Crews punches him into the corner to start and scores with a quick dropkick. Busick comes back with a running European uppercut (From an indy wrestler? You don't say.) and a chinlock, which he flips backwards to keep Crews in trouble. Another elbow to the face sets up another chinlock as this is starting to drag. Crews gets up with a spear and a running corner splash, followed by the toss into the helicopter bomb for the pin at 5:12.

Rating: D+. You shouldn't need two extended chinlocks in a five minute match. Girard has a really good look and a lot of intensity but the offense isn't exactly working so far. He seems similar to Tommaso Ciampa, which makes you wonder why they bothered signing two people who seem so much alike. Then again, you certainly can't tell how a career is going to go based off one match and it wasn't a disaster.

We look back at Carmella vs. Bayley from two weeks ago with Eva Marie and Nia Jax attacking until Asuka made the save.

Carmella and Bayley are ready for Eva and Nia tonight. They're friends now but Carmella wants another shot at the title. Bayley isn't worried about Asuka, even though she's going to be a threat down the line.

Tommaso Ciampa vs. Bull Dempsey

Bull takes 40 seconds to get his shirt off and we get some jumping jacks

before any contact. Ciampa wants a test of strength but is quickly run over, setting up a rolling backplash from Bull. Back up and Ciampa easily drops him with some hard shots and he rips at Bull's face. Ciampa starts cranking on the arm but misses a charge in the corner, allowing Bull to fire off the left hands. Not that it matters as a Fujiwara Armbar with Ciampa flipping over onto Bull's back is good for the submission at 4:18.

Rating: D+. I'm pretty sure this is it for Dempsey in NXT and it's not like he's going to be that missed. He's just a comedy jobber and you can put almost anyone into that spot. Ciampa was fine and it's nice to see him win a match instead of put up a good fight and then lose in the end.

Joe says the announcement means Sami has to suffer twice and that's just fine with him.

Sami sounds a bit nervous about the two out of three falls match but this is why he came back from the shoulder injury. He's ready though because his goal is to be the first ever two time NXT Champion.

Carmella/Bayley vs. Nia Jax/Eva Marie

Carmella starts with some Thesz Presses and left hands to Eva, followed by a double suplex to give Bayley a quick two. That means it's time for Nia to throw Bayley around and easily block a rollup attempt. Eva comes back in and is booed out of the arena, only to have Bayley take her down like the easy target that she is.

We take a break and come back with Carmella holding Eva in a headlock on the mat. Eva gets up and makes the tag off to Nia, who plants Carmella with a shoulder breaker. It's back to Eva for her grunting based offense, including a choke in the corner. Something like a cobra clutch from Nia keeps the villains in control and she swings Carmella around with ease.

Nia misses a charge and falls out to the floor though, allowing the hot tag to Bayley. The running elbows in the corner have Eva in trouble (like, more trouble than her trying to work a match) but Nia breaks up the cover off the Bayley to Belly. Carmella comes back in for her leg crossface with Nia making another save. Jax drops three straight legs on

Carmella, allowing Eva to get the pin at 11:34.

Rating: C-. Nothing to see here but I hope that doesn't mean we'll be seeing more of Nia and Eva as a one and a fourth headed monster. Carmella clearly wasn't going anywhere near the title for a long time so having her take the fall here makes the most sense. Eva is still doing well in this heel role but the heat isn't what it was before.

Regal and Balor are in the back with the boss talking about how Balor is approaching the longest reign in NXT Title history. Therefore, next week he'll be facing Neville. No word on if that's a title match or not.

Overall Rating: C. Not their strongest episode but it set up stuff for the next few weeks as well as helped to confirm a lot of what we're likely to see down in Dallas. This was your usual breezy episode of NXT and it's nice to not come into a show dreading how bad it might be on any given week.

Results

American Alpha b. Blake and Murphy – Grand Amplitude to Blake

Apollo Crews b. Christopher Girard – Helicopter Bomb

Tommaso Ciampa b. Bull Dempsey – Fujiwara Armbar

Eva Marie/Nia Jax b. Bayley/Carmella – Eva pinned Carmella after three legdrops from Jax

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NXT – February 17, 2016: The TV Fastlane

NXT

Date: February 17, 2016

Location: CFE Arena, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

Tonight is a big show for NXT as we'll find out the #1 contender for Finn Balor's NXT Title with the title shot coming at Takeover: Dallas in about six weeks. Other than that we're starting to see the next challenger to Bayley's Women's Title as Asuka seems ready to come after the belt. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Sami vs. Joe to bring us to tonight.

Opening sequence.

Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady/American Alpha vs. Scott Dawson/Dash Wilder/Blake and Murphy

No Carmella this week. Dawson and Gable get things going with the fans cheering for Chad as you would expect. Gable rides him to the mat and Dawson is quickly frustrated. Everything breaks down and the good guys clear the ring in a big stereo throw over the top. Back from a break with Blake holding Gable in a chinlock before Dawson scores with a good looking elbow to the jaw.

The heels keep taking turns on Gable in the corner until Dash plants him for two and puts on a chinlock. Back up and Gable collides with Wilder, finally allowing for the tag off to Jordan. Everything breaks down with Colin feeding Dawson into a belly to belly from Jason. Grand Amplitude gets two on Dawson with Dash making the save. Not that it matters as the Rocket Launcher puts Dawson away a few seconds later at 12:58.

Rating: C+. Totally standard and run of the mill “take four teams and throw them together into a big match” deal here and there’s nothing wrong with that. American Alpha should be ready to go after the belts in Dallas while Enzo and Cass should be on the main roster by then. Good match here though, even with the heels being badly outshined.

Deonna Purrazzo is ready for a shot at revenge on Asuka when Emma and Dana Brook come in to say they run this place.

Deonna Purrazzo vs. Asuka

Asuka starts fast with some kicks to the ribs and a leg bar to make things even worse. Back up and Deonna fires off some forearms but makes the mistake of slapping Asuka in the face. Asuka easily takes her down into an ankle lock before tucking the ankle behind Deonna’s back for a suplex. A tease of the Asuka Lock sets up a hard spinning kick to the head to put Purrazzo away at 2:53. Total squash.

We look back at Eva Marie and Nia Jax beating down Bayley and Carmella until Asuka made the save.

Nia and Eva say they were justified last week because Nia would have won the battle royal if she had been healthy. Asuka needs to stay out of their business. Eva sounded better here but still very scripted while Jax sounded natural.

Tye Dillinger vs. Alex Riley

Apparently Riley has called NXT a joke, which sends Graves on a tirade against Alex’s facial hair. They fight over wrist control to start until Tye nips up and shouts TEN. A hard clothesline from Riley earns a ONE as Graves thinks Riley has been ripped off by an Uber driver to make him this mad. Alex’s chinlock doesn’t go anywhere and Tye comes back with a Thesz Press, only to charge into a hard right hand. Riley grabs a full nelson but gets rolled up for the pin at 3:16.

Rating: D+. Not much here but that’s the case almost every time Riley is out there. The promotion has passed him by since his injury, though to be fair it had probably passed him by years ago. Dillinger has something

there with the TEN gimmick but he needs something else to go with it.

Finn Balor congratulates Apollo Crews on a great match last week and knows that Sami and Joe are going to give it their all tonight.

Baron Corbin comes in to see Regal and demands to be put in the #1 contenders match tonight. That gets him nowhere so Baron threatens violence and leaves.

Sami Zayn vs. Samoa Joe

Winner gets the title shot at some point in the future. Sami bails from a kick to start but gets caught in a wristlock to take him to the mat. Back up and Sami fights out of a headlock before running Joe over with a shoulder. The SAMI chants replace the OLE's as Sami grabs a wristlock. Joe gets sent to the floor and Sami teases a dive but has to backflip into the ring again as we take a break.

Back with Joe nailing a hard chop and catching a charging Sami with the Rock Bottom out of the corner. Sami tries slugging it out for some reason so Joe sweeps the leg to take over again as Zayn's face goes right into the mat. A hard kick to the face keeps Sami in trouble as they still haven't really cranked it up like you would expect them to. At least we're getting some loud strikes from Joe to make you cringe every time.

Sami tries to fight up but gets kicked again, only to come back with a clothesline to put Joe down. The Blue Thunder Bomb is easily blocked but Sami finally pulls him up for two. That's fine with Joe as he kicks Sami in the face (why try anything too complicated) and drops a backsplash for two more.

Back up and Joe tries another clothesline but has to fight out of a Koji Clutch attempt. A snap powerslam gets two for Joe but now it's Sami slugging away. Joe's enziguri in the corner staggers Zayn but he's still able to suplex Joe into the corner. The Helluva Kick is countered into the Koquina Clutch but Sami gets a rope. Sami is almost out of but still escapes the Muscle Buster, setting up the Helluva Kick for the pin out of nowhere at 16:12.

Rating: A-. This kept a slow pace throughout but they were hitting each other so hard that it was difficult to not get sucked in. Sami collapsing into the pin at the end is perfect for him as he is always fighting from behind and both guys are even in the end. This was the usual good stuff from a big time NXT main event, but did you really expect anything else?

However, all four shoulders are down and the referee looks confused. Regal comes out and gets an explanation but the referee says he can't pick a #1 contender because that was a draw. Confusion reigns as we go off the air.

Overall Rating: B+. It's another strong episode of NXT with the big main event anchoring the whole thing. They're doing a good job of setting up things for the Dallas show while not blowing anything big or making it seem like they're trying to stretch it out. At this point we're only six weeks away from Wrestlemania weekend so just let everything be built up especially well instead of doing the whole thing early.

Results

Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady/American Alpha b. Scott Dawson/Dash Wilder/Blake and Murphy – Rocket Launcher to Dawson

Asuka b. Deonna Purrazzo – Spinning kick to the head

Tye Dillinger b. Alex Riley – Rollup

Sami Zayn vs. Samoa Joe went to a draw

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NXT – February 10, 2016: Hug Her Up

NXT

Date: February 10, 2016

Location: CFE Arena, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

We're on the road again and in this case we have a big main event with Bayley defending the Women's Title against her friend Carmella. This isn't quite on the level of the Takeover shows and title shots but the big TV shows are almost always good with this hopefully being no exception. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

The arena looks almost the same as Full Sail, save for the lack of a ramp.

Baron Corbin vs. Johnny Gargano

The fans chant for JOHNNY WRESTLING and he avoids a charge in the corner before pounding in left hands. Corbin will have none of that and throws Gargano around, followed by some heavy stomping in the corner. We get some good old fashioned yelling at the referee before Corbin slaps on a cobra clutch. Gargano reverses into a choke but gets sent hard into the Deep Six. End of Days is countered with a HARD superkick for two and Corbin rolls to the floor where he's almost out on his feet. Gargano goes right after him but walks into End of Days for the pin at 5:50.

Rating: C. Gargano is a good hand in there and the Johnny Wrestling name is awesome. I don't think anyone was expecting Corbin to lose again here but it was cool to see someone get close like that. Nice opener here as it's almost always worth seeing a match happening for the sake of having

a match, especially when it starts the show.

We look back at the end of Zayn vs. Joe vs. Corbin.

Sami is disappointed in the ruling but is willing to go through whatever to get the NXT Title back.

Vaudevillains vignette.

Hype Bros vs. Corey Hollis/John Skyler

Graves is all over Mojo as the announcers disagree over whether the Internet Title is still being defended. Ryder dropkicks Hollis in the face to start and it's off to Rawley, who declares that Hollis AIN'T HYPED. A double clothesline sends Hollis and Skyler out to the floor and the Hype Bros are in control as you would expect. Back in and Ryder gets in a bit of trouble before Hollis charges into some knees. The hot tag brings in Rawley to clean house and Ryder adds a Broski Boot. The Hype Ryder puts Hollis away at 3:32.

Rating: D+. Just a squash here but the Hype Bros continue to have some excellent energy out there. There's nothing wrong with a fun team who beats up the lower level acts but then goes nowhere against the top level guys. Let the Hype Bros be a goofy team and then have them lose to some more important team and everything will be fine.

Bayley says keeping the title has been harder than winning it but she's not ready to let it go yet. Carmella is ready to make the most of her shot and their friendship isn't in jeopardy.

Alexa Bliss vs. Cameron

I had forgotten about Cameron and her entrance talking (I hear no singing anywhere) of Girl Bye. Cameron armdrags her down before choking on the middle rope. Alexa snaps the throat across the top rope and the fans are really pleased with Bliss' aggression. Bliss is instantly the face here as the fans start booing Cameron out of the building on near principle alone. It's nowhere near Eva Marie's level but they clearly don't want to see her.

Cameron gets two off a running flip neckbreaker but Bliss puts her down and misses the moonsault into the double knees. It doesn't matter as Cameron sells it anyway (this one was on Bliss as her knees didn't really even get close to connecting), setting up the Sparkle Splash for the pin at 4:13.

Rating: D-. Other than Bliss looking good, this was a borderline disaster. Cameron is some kind of weird flashback to the horrifying days of Divas past where they were all about the looks and how well they filled out tight costumes. This is a different era and the women like Cameron just aren't going to cut it when we're likely about to see Bayley carry Carmella to a good match in a few minutes.

Enzo and Cass are ready to start their pursuit of back to back Tag Teams of the Year. Enzo: "We're back to back like Lethal Weapon 2." American Alpha comes in to say this is their year before hyping up an eight man tag next week.

Elias Samson vs. Jesse Sorensen

Corey starts things off with a big rant about going to Pittsburgh and being disgusted by all the people playing Nickleback songs as Samson cleans house. The fans get in a DRIFT AWAY chant at Samson, who responds by dropping knees and ripping at Jesse's face. The snap neckbreaker is good enough to pin Soresen at 2:38.

We look back at Finn Balor pinning Apollo Crews last week.

Crews has no regrets and promises a new Crews next time.

Women's Title: Carmella vs. Bayley

Carmella is challenging. After the Big Match Intros, it's time to trade some early holds with neither of them getting the advantage. Carmella's wristlock has Bayley in some trouble but the fans get her back up with a "HUG HER UP BAYLEY! HUG HER UP!" chant. Bayley slams her down and we take a break.

Back with Bayley cranking on the arms but Carmella slams her into the mat a few times. A hurricanrana staggers Bayley but she sends Carmella into

the buckle to take over. Bayley gets sent to the floor though and Carmella actually busts out a suicide cross body for an NXT chant. She even does it again for two back inside and the Staten Island Shuffle looks to set up crossface, only to have Bayley cradle her for two. We hit a nice pinfall reversal sequence with some very close rollups until Bayley keeps her down for the pin at 11:03.

Rating: C+. Yep Bayley is amazing. This was all the match needed to be and Carmella got to have the match of her career so far out there. No one was expecting this to be a masterpiece or even very good so just a nice wrestling match with little drama is just fine. It's all about Takeover for Bayley now and that's all it should be about.

Post match Eva Marie and Nia Jax beat Carmella down. Bayley gets taken out as well until Asuka makes the save. Asuka looks at Bayley's title and smiles that creepy grin of hers.

Samoa Joe says that Sami has no triple threat to hide behind next week. I like this whole ending the show with a promo for the upcoming show. You don't get that enough.

Overall Rating: B-. Just a nice wrestling show this week which seemed to set up one of the title matches for Dallas. As usual they were going about their business and getting things done as they needed to. Next week's match will be fun and should give us another match for Takeover (if not earlier) as things continue to roll along very nicely around here.

Results

Baron Corbin b. Johnny Gargano – End of Days

Hype Bros b. Corey Hollis/John Skyler – Hype Ryder to Hollis

Alexa Bliss b. Cameron – Sparkle Splash

Elias Samson b. Jesse Sorensen – Swinging neckbreaker

Bayley b. Carmella – Rollup

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Marcus Louis, Sylvester LeFort and Bull Dempsey Gone From NXT

Louis and LeFort have barely been used for months and Dempsey was little more than a comedy jobber. It's strange to see people leaving NXT though as they rarely release anyone.

NXT – February 3, 2016: It's Like Being A Proud Parent

NXT

Date: February 3, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

It's a big week here on NXT as we have a non-title match between NXT Champion Finn Balor and Apollo Crews, who had a shot at the title late last year which was interrupted with the match pretty much even. In addition to that we should be getting some updates on the ending to last week's triple threat match which ended in a double submission. Let's get to it.

We open with a quick preview of Crews vs. Balor.

Opening sequence.

Vaudevillains vs. Hype Bros

The Bros have quite the long entrance with smoke coming down from the ceiling while they pose on the buckles. Mojo rolls English up for two to start as Corey talks about Alf. It's off to Ryder for a running seated Blockbuster (think a Hennig Necksnap from the other way) but Gotch grabs Zack's feet to take over.

Simon comes in legally to put on a chinlock as the announcers try to figure out when the Vaudevillains fell off track, which sounds like code for starting their heel turn. Ryder kicks both villains away and makes the tag off to Mojo so Graves can make Ghostbusters jokes due to the bright green gear. Everything breaks down and Ryder misses the Broski Boot, setting up the Whirling Dervish to pin Zack at 4:16.

Rating: C. Totally fine match here though I'm really not sure about either of these teams going anywhere. The Bros are going to stay over no matter what they do based on their incredible energy alone so let them have a few wins here and there to give them a bit of credibility. The Vaudevillains on the other hand.....I'm not sure how much further they're really going to go.

We look back at Carmella winning the battle royal to become #1 contender a few weeks back.

It's time for a sitdown interview with Carmella where she talks about her dad being a wrestler in the 90s (albeit a jobber) who taught her a bunch of submission grappling. Carmella can't wait for her title shot next week

because she and Bayley are going to be friends no matter what. Tonight she's going to prove how she deserves to be champion when she defeats Emma. This was a VERY toned down Carmella and showed a completely different side of her which worked better than I was expecting.

Scott Dawson and Dash Wilder are tired of hearing the same things from Enzo Amore and Colin Cassady because they've demanded shot after shot. Not that it matters because they're never going to win any of them since they're just not that good. They're fine with giving them one more shot because it's not going to work.

Carmella vs. Emma

They trade headlocks to start until Emma takes her down and pounds in right hands. A twisting wristlock keeps Carmella on the mat and Emma pulls on both arms at the same time. Carmella fights up but gets pulled down by the hair in a hurry. Emma loads up a butterfly suplex but gets countered into a backslide of all things for the pin at 4:16.

Rating: D+. Well it wasn't the most interesting thing in the world but it did exactly what it was designed to do. Carmella gets a clean win over someone with some credibility around here, which is really necessary with just a week to go before the title shot against Bayley next week. It's probably just a one off match so do what you can in the limited time you have.

We look at the end of last week's triple threat.

Sami Zayn has looked at the video multiple times and thinks he should win because he had the Sharpshooter on longer. He has faith in the outcome.

Joe has nothing to say.

Video on American Alpha.

Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady vs. ???/???

Before the match, Enzo reiterates that if he and Cass had a dime for every time they were knocked down and didn't get back up, they would have zero dimes. They are hard bodies and there's only ONE WORD to describe

people who try to knock them down. Enzo easily takes Jobber #1 down to start and does a little dance before scoring off a big knee lift. Cass comes in and throws his partner into Jobber #1 as the announcers have no idea what to call these guys. #2 is LAUNCHED to the floor and the Rocket Launcher ends this in a hurry at 2:14.

Apollo Crews says he gets to prove himself tonight after having that taken away in his first shot at Finn Balor.

William Regal has made his decision on the #1 contendership but Baron Corbin comes into his office to interrupt. There will be a rematch but Corbin isn't going to be involved. Instead, it's going to be Zayn vs. Joe for the title shot at some point in the future.

Asuka vs. Santana Garrett

Garrett is quickly sent into the ropes for the running hip attack, followed by a HARD shot to the face. Asuka misses a running knee to the face though and gets rolled up for two. Something like a leapfrog into a cross armbreaker has Garrett in trouble and the Asuka Lock is good for the submission at 2:26.

Finn Balor is looking forward to seeing Zayn vs. Joe but tonight he's going to prove to Crews that he may be good but he's not the best.

Apollo Crews vs. Finn Balor

Non-title and non-Demon for Balor. They shake hands to start and Balor starts cranking on an armbar. A headlock keeps Crews in trouble and they're certainly taking their time here. Crews is stuck in the hold for a full minute but he does keep making Finn work with some rollups. Apollo nips up and scores with a dropkick, which seems to make the announcers think everything is even.

We take a break and come back with Balor caught in a chinlock. Finn rolls through a sunset flip to dropkick a seated Crews before going back to the armbar. Crews gets up one more time for another escape and the champ is getting frustrated. It's very short lived though as Balor takes him right back down into another armbar as the slow pace continues. Another counter

is broken up so Finn knocks him to the floor for a BIG flip dive.

A top rope double stomp to the back (not the Coup de Grace) gets two on Crews and now the shock is setting in. Crews throws him into the air for two off a big Samoan Drop, only to get caught in a Sling Blade. That's fine with Crews who blocks the basement dropkick and gets two more off the gorilla press/standing moonsault. Balor kicks him in the head and scores with a second Sling Blade, followed by the Coup de Grace for no cover. Instead it's the Bloody Sunday (not named) for the pin at 15:03.

Rating: B-. This was an interesting one with a nice story of Balor controlling because he's just flat out better but Crews getting back into things when the match was wrestled in his style. Balor winning in the end with the bigger finisher worked, though the announcers and crowd really didn't seem to get as into this as they were shooting for. Balor certainly has the stuff but Crews hasn't really shown that he can do anything more than be athletic.

Balor helps him to his feet post match and they shake hands again. The announcers confirm that it's Zayn vs. Joe in two weeks to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. As usual, they're building up the big TV shows (taped in a bigger arena to make things feel more special) by using every bit of the TV time they have. Not only are they setting up stuff for the coming weeks, they're also planting seeds for what's coming at Takeover in Dallas. Watching this show is like watching your kid succeed in school and doing everything you want them to do. It's such a nice feeling and they never let me down.

Results

Vaudevillains b. Hype Bros – Whirling Dervish to Ryder

Carmella b. Emma – Backslide

Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady b. ???/??? – Rocket Launcher

Asuka b. Santana Garrett – Asuka Lock

Finn Balor b. Apollo Crews – Bloody Sunday

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NXT – January 27, 2016: The Road To More Good Wrestling

NXT

Date: January 27, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

Tonight is a big night as we find out the #1 contender for the NXT Title with the title shot potentially coming at Takeover: Dallas over Wrestlemania weekend. We have Baron Corbin vs. Sami Zayn vs. Samoa Joe in a triple threat match with the winner getting a shot at some point in the future. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

American Alpha vs. Blake and Murphy

The announcers accuse Bliss of staring at Jordan as he starts with Murphy. Jason gets his kick to the ribs caught but keeps jumping over the attempted legsweeps. It's off to Gable to start in on the arm but a hair pull stops his twisting. Blake comes in and is taken down just as fast as

Gable is clearly just having fun with both of them in there. Chad dives over him a few times into some armdrags and throws, followed by a crucifix for two.

We get the GABLE chants to the Kurt Angle tune until Murphy claims a knee injury. Of course it's a gold bricking job as he waves Murphy over for a distraction to set up a chop block on Gable. It's time to start in on the leg until Gable kicks Murphy over the top and out to the floor for a crash. The hot tag brings in Jordan for suplexes all around, capped off by Grand Amplitude on Blake at 7:23.

Rating: C+. It's clear that American Alpha is about five steps ahead of everyone else in the division but we're likely going to wait a bit before they get to go after the titles. At least we get to be entertained while we wait for them to go for the titles though as this was a clinic on dismantling a lower level team. Fun stuff here.

Emma is ready for Carmella next week because Bayley carried the team last week. Carmella has never actually done anything around here and she even lost to Blue Pants.

Stills of Sami Zayn entering the Royal Rumble.

Video on Asuka.

Nia Jax vs. Liv Morgan

Eva Marie is out with Jax as we still wait to know why they're associated. Morgan tries to power Jax around to start and gets caught in an easy cobra clutch. A jawbreaker staggers Jax a bit, only to have a side slam set up the legdrop for the pin at 2:10.

Carmella is ready for Emma next week and promises to beat her all alone. Enzo and Cass aren't impressed by Dash and Dawson either and promises to take care of them as soon as they can.

Video on Baron Corbin.

We get the same sinister Vaudevillains vignette from last week.

Bull Dempsey vs. Alex Riley

The fans chant WELCOME BACK as Bull does jumping jacks. Riley takes him down to start and we're in an early chinlock. Bull pops up with left hands but walks into a spinebuster, followed by a knee to the face to give Riley the pin at 2:07.

After a break, Riley says he's tired of watching NXT and never hearing his name mentioned.

Elias Samson vs. John Skyler

Samson whips him into the corner to start and scores with a quick dropkick. A right hand drops Skyler and Samson sits in the corner ala Raven. Back up and Samson grabs a very fast swinging neckbreaker for the pin at 1:57.

The Hype Bros aren't impressed by the Vaudevillains' new videos. This turns into a discussion of Mojo watching Ryder sleep.

Video on Samoa Joe.

We look at Finn Balor vs. Apollo Crews from a few months back where Corbin interfered to break it up. They fight again in a non-title match next week.

Baron Corbin vs. Samoa Joe vs. Sami Zayn

Winner is #1 contender. They circle each other to start until Corbin hits Joe in the face for a bit of a surprise. Sami low bridges Baron to the floor but Joe breaks up the dive and pulls Zayn to the floor. Baron gets a boot to the chest to keep Joe in control and Sami gets punched down in the corner. A knee drop misses Sami but Corbin comes back in to jump Sami from behind.

We take a break and come back with Joe still on the floor and Corbin charging into an elbow in the corner. That means it's time for Joe to come back in, only to be taken down by Sami. Corbin and Joe are knocked outside and it's finally time to connect with the running flip dive. Back in and Corbin grabs a quick Deep Six for two on Sami, only to get kicked

in the face by Joe. Sami fights out of the Muscle Buster and grabs the Blue Thunder Bomb for two on Corbin.

The knockout lets Joe pull Sami to the floor for a quick Koquina Clutch before walking into End of Days. Sami dives back in to break up the cover and Corbin is livid. He pounds on Sami in the corner but runs into the exploder, followed by the Helluva Kick with Joe making the save this time. Joe gets sent to the floor so Sami puts Corbin in a Sharpshooter with Joe coming back in to add a Crossface. Corbin taps at 15:33 and we've got two winners.

Rating: B. If this means we get Joe vs. Sami down the line, I have zero issues with this finish. Corbin gets to save some face by getting caught in a double submission which would make almost anyone tap so everyone comes out looking strong. Really solid main event here and another good story being told.

Both guys say they won so here's GM William Regal to say he'll have to review the tape and make a decision on this controversy.

Overall Rating: B. Another good week here and again we have more stuff to look forward to next week. They're really nailing these ideas as we get ready for the big show down in Dallas. The ending has been looking forward to the fallout which should be another awesome match between Sami and Joe. As usual, building to good wrestling is the right idea and NXT keeps nailing it.

Results

America Alpha b. Blake and Murphy – Grand Amplitude to Blake

Nia Jax b. Liv Morgan – Legdrop

Alex Riley b. Bull Dempsey – Knee to the jaw

Elias Samson b. John Skyler – Swinging neckbreaker

Sami Zayn and Samoa Joe b. Baron Corbin – Sharpshooter and Crossface at the same time

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NXT – January 20, 2016: The Other Way

NXT

Date: January 20, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

We're in a bit of a weird point in NXT as it's still a few months before the next announced Takeover and we're just starting to set up the big feuds before we get to the really big feuds. Next week it's Baron Corbin vs. Samoa Joe vs. Sami Zayn for the #1 contendership so odds are they'll get some focus tonight. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Sami Zayn vs. Adam Rose

Sami works on a wristlock to start and spins around into an armbar. We're already well into the OLE chants but Rose cuts them off with a kick to the head. Some elbow drops set up a chinlock on Sami but he's quickly on his feet. Rose chops him right back down though and drops a top rope

headbutt for two before choking on the ropes. Sami shrugs those off as well though and grabs a Koji Clutch out of nowhere for the submission at 5:27.

Rating: D+. If there's one thing Sami Zayn does better than almost anyone, it's taking a beating and making a quick comeback to win while keeping it realistic. Bringing Rose back for a loss like this is the right way to use veterans here because having the big stars come down and treating them like a bigger deal than the NXT roster isn't going to be accepted. That and Sami is a bigger deal than Rose anyway.

Johnny Gargano says he isn't intimidated by a bully like Samoa Joe. His solution: punch Joe in the mouth. As long as his heart is beating, Johnny Wrestling will not back down.

Chad Gable and Jason Jordan talk about not being nominated for Tag Team of the Year while Blake and Murphy were on the list. They know they're getting better and they're going to the top. Another word for top is alpha and they're both Americans, so they might as well be called American Alpha.

Tye Dillinger vs. Apollo Crews

Dillinger's entrance is even more energetic than usual here. They circle each other a bit to start until Dillinger takes him down with a wristlock. A headlock puts Crews on the mat and it's time for a quick victory lap with Tye giving himself a ten. That earns him a delayed vertical suplex with Crews only slipping a bit as Dillinger knees him in the head. It's a bit more impressive than when Lashley does it. Dillinger rolls outside but slide back in to hit a dive on Crews. Something like a Codebreaker gets two on Apollo but he pops back up and hits his lifting sitout powerbomb for the pin at 4:35.

Rating: C+. Better match than I was expecting here with Dillinger putting in more effort than I've seen from him in a long time. Crews continues to be an amazing athlete but I still haven't found a reason to connect with him yet. He's just a guy out there doing a bunch of cool looking stuff with nothing more to him. Talented for sure, but he needs some fine tuning.

Post match Crews says he's had something on his mind for a few weeks now. He isn't one to have a match end in a disqualification. Now he knows he hasn't earned a title shot, but he'd love to face Finn Balor one more time, even in a non-title match.

Alexa Bliss isn't happy with Blake and Murphy losing in London but she's going to lead by example tonight when she teams with Emma and beats up Bayley and Carmella.

We get a Vaudevillains vignette with the two of them looking very angry.

Stills of Kevin Owens appearing at the NXT Milwaukee house show.

Baron Corbin vs. Rich Swann

Swann is a longtime indy talent who recently signed with NXT. Corbin throws him into the corner to start and backdrops him into a 450. Off to something like a Tazmission from Corbin before Rich starts using some speed to avoid a few charges. A spinning kick to the face gets two on Corbin but Rich misses something off the top and charges into a big swinging Rock Bottom (called Deep Six) for the pin at 3:14.

Rating: C. Again a better match than I was expecting here with Swann looking solid in his debut. This isn't a match to judge him off though as he didn't have a character or anything like that. Then again that's how a lot of people have started down in NXT and turned out just fine so I wouldn't be worried. Corbin having a secondary finisher is a good idea as End of Days only works so well.

Bayley and Carmella are ready for their tag match tonight when Dawson and Wilder come in to say Carmella is a loser just like Enzo and Cass. Carmella is so upset that she's being driven bananas (her words) but Bayley says save it for the match.

Carmella/Bayley vs. Emma/Alexa Bliss

Dana is here with Emma/Bliss. Emma gets in a cheap shot on Bayley and the champ's ribs are damaged before the opening bell. Bayley starts anyway but is quickly dragged into the corner and stomped in the corner with the villains staying on the bad ribs. We take an early break and come back

with Bliss holding Bayley in an armbar. Bayley gets up and hits a quick middle rope dropkick which only hurts her ribs even more. Emma breaks up the hot tag attempt and gets suplexed as a result, only to have Dana offer a distraction to prevent another tag attempt.

The Emma Sandwich (called a cross body in the corner) stays on the ribs and it's back to Bliss for another armbar, even though Bayley's hand is grabbing the ropes. Bliss drags her away and that's good enough for the referee for some reason. Bayley fights out of the corner though and tags in Carmella to take over on Bliss as things speed up. Carmella's little dance sets up a Bronco Buster and the leg crossface makes Bliss tap at 9:26.

Rating: C+. Standard formula tag match here with Bayley playing the perfect face in peril until Carmella gets to make the comeback for the win. It makes a lot more sense to have Carmella get the win here as she needs to be built up before the title match and what better way to do that than by beating one of the many midcard heels?

Balor agrees to give Crews a non-title match.

Johnny Gargano vs. Samoa Joe

The fans start a JOHNNY WRESTLING chant which is such an awesome name. Joe drives him into the corner to start and grinds his forearm over Johnny's face before elbowing him in the jaw. Gargano snaps off a quick enziguri to put Joe on the floor, only to have him kick Johnny's leg out to take over again. The snap jabs have Gargano in trouble again and Joe kicks the leg out one more time, sending Gargano into a near 360.

Another kick puts Gargano on the floor but he dives in at nine with Graves ripping on him for going back to the beating. Back in and a quick enziguri and DDT stagger Joe but he kicks Gargano out of the air on a slingshot attempt. Gargano is already knocked silly so the Koquina Clutch puts him out of his misery at 4:30.

Rating: C+. Joe is the kind of guy who can work this physical ROH style and make it look good in short bursts. The Ciampa match was better but this was another hard hitting match where both guys came out looking

good, even though this was pretty one sided for the most part. Gargano is another name that should be fine.

Overall Rating: B. This is where NXT continues to amaze me. They can have a week of nothing but storytelling and then the next week they do almost nothing but solid wrestling. The triple threat is looking better and you have another big match to build towards with Crews vs. Balor, even though it's non-title. As usual, they set up a goal and then they accomplish it, usually in the span of just a week. That's unheard of in today's wrestling and NXT does it nearly every single time. Well done, as usual.

Results

Sami Zayn b. Adam Rose – Koji Clutch

Apollo Crews b. Tye Dillinger – Lifting sitout powerbomb

Baron Corbin b. Rich Swann – Deep Six

Carmella/Bayley b. Emma/Alexa Bliss – Leg crossface to Bliss

Samoa Joe b. Johnny Gargano – Koquina Clutch

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NXT – January 13, 2016: That Weird Starting Point

NXT

Date: January 13, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

It's the first regular show of the new year and we're at the start of a new taping cycle. We've got a few months to go before we get to the next Takeover, assuming there isn't another one before Wrestlemania weekend. In addition to that, we're getting something like the NXT Slammy Awards tonight with the end of the year awards. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

The announcers welcome us to the show for a change.

Here's General Manager William Regal to announce tonight's main event: a battle royal for the #1 contendership to the Women's Title. With that out of the way, Regal introduces someone who hasn't been here in a long time: Sami Zayn.

Sami thinks the fans remember him but gets cut off by OLE and WELCOME BACK chants. In case you don't know him, he's the lead singer of a band and that OLE chant is their lead single. He's also a man responsible for building NXT and making what it is today. They just sold out a UK tour but it's nice to be back home at Full Sail University. Sami is back for a reason though, and that is to become the first ever two time NXT Champion.

This brings out Samoa Joe who doesn't seem to think much of Sami's plans. Joe doesn't know why Sami thinks he deserves another shot because the last time he had a title shot, it was Joe who had to come out here and save him. Finn Balor barely survived against Joe in London so if Sami wants to keep his shoulder in one piece, he better walk away right now.

Now it's Baron Corbin interrupting to say that he actually won at Takeover. While Sami was gone, he was surpassed by someone more durable so Sami needs to go to the back of the line. Joe brings up choking Corbin out and tells Sami to mind his place in his ring. The ring is Sami's place but Corbin jumps him from behind, only to get kicked in the face and knocked to the floor. Joe backs off from Sami who is left standing alone.

Bayley says she survived against Nia Jax instead of actually winning. Tonight she's looking forward to seeing who survives in the battle royal and she might even give the winner a hug. She actually does hug Rich Brennan.

It's time for the End of the Year Award winners, announced in a video package. The trophies are golden ring bells.

Tag Team of the Year: Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady

Female Competitor of the Year: Bayley

Male Competitor of the Year: Finn Balor

NXT Takeover of the Year: Takeover: Brooklyn

Match of the Year: Bayley vs. Sasha Banks – Takeover: Brooklyn

Overall Competitor of the Year: Finn Balor

Tommaso Ciampa vs. Danny Burch

Ciampa takes him down by the arm to start but Burch gets up and scores with a middle rope dropkick to take over. That just ticks Ciampa off so he blasts Burch in the face with a forearm. Something like a hanging Downward Spiral off the top rope gets two for Ciampa but Burch pops him in the jaw for the same. They slug it out until Ciampa takes him down and grabs a flip over armbar (picture Becky Lynch's Disarm-Her but with Ciampa laying over Burch's back instead of sitting on the shoulder) for the tap out at 3:42.

Rating: C. This was a hard hitting brawl while it lasted but I'm not

entirely sold on Ciampa. The armbar was a nice finisher but it seems like almost everyone is using a submission hold these days. As usual though, NXT does a great job of using jobbers to set up bigger stars, which is almost unheard of on the main roster for the last several years.

Enzo and Cass say they haven't forgotten about Dash and Dawson taking them out. The champs hid behind a woman like chicken tenders and next time business will be finished.

Billie Kay, Deonna Purrazzo and Emma all say they'll win the battle royal.

Two weeks from tonight, Sami Zayn vs. Samoa Joe vs. Baron Corbin for the #1 contendership.

Scott Dawson/Dash Wilder vs. Ascension

Non-title. Wilder gets in Viktor's face to start but gets pounded into the corner for his efforts. Ascension is the clear crowd favorite here which is really strange to see. It's off to Dawson, who has a bit more luck by taking Viktor to the mat for two. The champs beat Viktor down in the corner and we hit the chinlock for a bit. Viktor fights up and catches Dawson in an STO, allowing for the hot tag off to Konnor. The flapjack drops Wilder and everything breaks down, allowing a blind tag to set up the Shatter Machine on Konnor for the pin at 4:10.

Rating: C+. I liked this a bit better and it's probably due to the false hope that Ascension might actually start being booked like a power team instead of the goofs they've been since their Raw debut. Or maybe it was the Shatter Machine which is a really awesome looking finisher for such a slow paced team.

Nia Jax isn't medically cleared for the battle royal. Eva Marie says she has this.

Carmella, Peyton Royce and Alexa Bliss say they'll win.

Elias Samson vs. Corey Hollis

Samson forearm him down to start and stomps away in the corner. A throw

sends Hollis flying and Samson stop to laugh. Samson looks down at him before grabbing a hard swinging neckbreaker for the pin at 2:20.

Samson says what this place needs is what he is.

Finn Balor says the match against Samoa Joe was the most draining match of his career but he faces every challenger head to head. Now he's just going to wait to find out his next opponent. Corbin thinks he's the uncrowned champion, Sami is a friend and Joe is the one that will never go away.

Cameron, Aliyah, Asuka and Liv Morgan promise to win. Well Cameron promises to win the battle royal to become #1 contender to the Women's battle royal but you get the idea.

Battle Royal

Carmella, Peyton Royce, Alexa Bliss, Aliyah, Cameron, Liv Morgan, Billie Kay, Deonna Purrazzo, Emma, Eva Marie, Asuka

Eva gets right in Asuka's face to start and is quickly dropped with a shot to the face. The other nine all circle Asuka with Emma jumping her, starting everyone else into a brawl. Eva is out on the floor but not eliminated, likely to reduce her chances of severely injuring someone during the match.

We take an early break and come back with no eliminations but Cameron throws Aliyah out a few seconds later. Cameron gets rid of Purrazzo as well, followed by Morgan botching something that looked like a powerbomb. She tries it again but Bliss comes up from behind and tosses Morgan and Cameron at the same time. Emma gets Carmella in the Dilemma to send her underneath the ropes and out to the floor, meaning no elimination. Bliss chokes Emma, only to be put on the apron and punched off for an elimination.

We're down to Emma, Royce, Kay, Asuka, Eva and Carmella, with the final two on the floor. Emma has to kick away the other two Australians, only to have Asuka kick her out of the corner for an elimination. Billie and Peyton put Asuka on the apron but of course start fighting over who gets

to eliminate her. Asuka puts them both on the apron and hip attacks both of them to the floor to get us down to three. Eva sneaks in and eliminates Asuka, freaking out the crowd until Carmella throws Eva out for the win at 10:45.

Rating: C-. These things are always hard to rate but the false finish was a nice way to tease the crowd. It says a lot that they had to have two people on the floor until the end for the double false finish. The other good thing here though is they kept Asuka safe, likely for a big showdown in Texas against Bayley.

Carmella celebrates until Bayley comes out for a hug. Asuka gives them an evil smile to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. This show was much more about setting stuff up instead the show itself which is good long term but not the most interesting hour on its own. The triple threat in two weeks should be really good and they're already doing a good job of setting up the women's division with the new names. I mean, they're not the Four Horsewomen but at least they're trying and should be filling things in quite well. Good enough show here but again it's about setting stuff up later on.

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