

# NXT – January 3, 2018: I Have An Eye For Talent

## NXT

Date: January 3, 2018

Hosts: Kayla Braxton, Mike Rome

It's the first show of the year but as a special, we're looking at the Best Of 2017 in a double length episode. These are always fun to look at as there's nearly a guarantee that you've forgotten at least something that you'll see tonight. There's been a lot of good throughout the year for NXT so let's get to it.

As usual, even if the versions presented on the broadcast are clipped, I'll be posting the full review of each match.

Opening sequence.

We look at Bobby Roode defeating Shinsuke Nakamura for the NXT Title in January.

We look at the rematch from Takeover: Orlando with the full entrances, albeit with some different camera angles during the entrances. Roode retained and Nakamura got the big sendoff.

Video on Shinsuke Nakamura's NXT career from William Regal announcing his debut all the way to his farewell in April.

Video on Drew McIntyre coming to NXT.

From Takeover: San Antonio.

## Tag Team Titles: DIY vs. Authors of Pain

Johnny Gargano and Tommaso Ciampa are defending and unfortunately the Authors take off their jackets, meaning the name tags go away. Razar takes Ciampa into the corner and shouts at him a lot, drawing a PSYCHO KILLER chant from the crowd. Gargano tries the spear through the ropes

and is casually swatted away. Everything breaks down and the champs just can't do anything with rights and lefts.

Some running knees work a bit better though and the monsters are knocked to the floor for a suicide dive and running knee from the apron. Back in and Akam casually slams Gargano over the top and the beating is on. It's off to an over the shoulder backbreaker until Johnny slips down into an enziguri....which has no effect whatsoever.

Gargano finally slips away and makes the hot tag off to Ciampa so house can be cleaned as well as possible. Some German suplexes take the Authors down and Paul Ellering is losing it on the floor. The referee tells Ciampa "six minutes left" as he chops away at Akam, who takes Ciampa's head off for two. The champs get two of their own off a double spear but Johnny gets knocked to the floor again, leaving Ciampa to get caught in a powerbomb/neckbreaker combination for two.

Johnny is back in to break up the Last Chapter and it's off to the double arm submission. Akam powers out of Johnny's crossface though and slams Gargano onto Tommaso to break the other hold. That's a really effective spot as the champs took their best shot and couldn't stop the raw power. They slug it out from their knees but the double strike is countered into the Authors' double powerbomb. The Last Chapter on Ciampa give us new champions at 14:27.

**Rating:** B. I'm kind of surprised here but at the same time not exactly. Coming in I didn't think this would happen but now that it has, it makes the most sense. That being said, I was very, very pleasantly surprised here as I was expecting a big drop off and got the best match the Authors have ever had. It's a good match though and that's all you could ask for out of these guys.

We look at Drew McIntyre winning the NXT Title at Takeover: Brooklyn. Again it's just a few minutes of highlights from a long match. Post match, the yet to be named Undisputed Era ran in and attacked McIntyre.

Video on the Undisputed Era, focusing on Adam Cole.

We look at the Undisputed Era stealing the Tag Team Titles two weeks ago.

Here are some of the tag teams to watch in 2018: the Undisputed Era, the Street Profits, Tino Sabbatelli and Riddick Moss, Heavy Machinery and TM61 (returning from injury in two weeks).

Video on Aleister Black vs. Velvetten Dream. I underrated the heck out of that match.

From Takeover: WarGames.

### Aleister Black vs. Velvetten Dream

Black does his still awesome rising up entrance. Dream debuts some custom made tights with himself on one leg and Black on the other ala Rick Rude back in the day. The fans are rather pleased with Dream, even as he slaps Black in the face. They hit the mat to start with Black working on an armbar before grabbing something like an Octopus hold. Dream slips out and actually tries to turn it into a striking match, earning himself a trip to the floor.

That allows Black to backflip into his sitting pose, right in front of Dream. A hip swivel doesn't seem to get on Black's nerves, but he does look away a bit. Dream sits down as well as the fans chant SAY HIS NAME. Black crawls forward like Dream did a few weeks back, freaking Dream out for a change. Dream actually snaps his throat across the ropes to send Black outside, meaning it's time for more posing.

Back in and Dream gets two off a good looking superkick before we hit a reverse chinlock (Dream: "SAY IT! SAY IT!"). Black gets tied up in the ropes as the fans really want him to say it. Dream slaps him though and that's just not a good idea. Black speeds things up with some strikes and a springboard moonsault press for two (SWEET, according to the annoying fans).

A quick Death Valley Driver gives Dream two so he tries a super version, only to get kicked down. Black knees him in the face for a close two, only to get caught in a Sister Abigail into a DDT for a delayed two. The Purple Rainmaker lands on a raised boot though, sending Dream into the ropes. Black kicks him in the face but walks into a superkick. That's enough for Black though and it's Black Mass for the pin at 14:41.

**Rating:** B+. Who knew Dream had that in him? This was all about the mind games at first but at the end of the day, you (mostly) knew it was going to be Black Mass wrapping this up. Black seems ready to become a huge deal around here and Dream...I'm not sure where he goes from here actually. Really good match though.

Post match Black takes the mic and says "enjoy infamy...Velveteen Dream." I'm not sure what to make of that. Sign of respect maybe?

Video on the build to Andrade Cien Almas vs. Drew McIntyre.

From November 17, the night before Takeover: WarGames.

NXT Title: Drew McIntyre vs. Adam Cole

Date: November 17, 2017

Location: Aztec Theater, San Antonio, Texas

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Percy Watson, Nigel McGuinness

Drew is defending, Cole has Bobby Fish and Kyle O'Reilly with him and Shawn Michaels is guest referee. McIntyre takes him down with almost no effort and Cole seems to need a fresh plan. Cole gets tossed off a headlock and bails to the floor as the stalling begins. Back in and a jawbreaker staggers Drew, allowing Fish to grab his foot. Fish and O'Reilly get on the apron so Shawn ejects them both.

That earns a SWEET CHIN MUSIC chant as reality sets in for Cole. One heck of a backdrop puts Cole down (well up and then down) and a poke to the eye has no effect on Drew. Shawn calls Drew off of Cole in the corner and McIntyre isn't exactly happy. Cole takes the knee out though and it's time for a break. Back with Cole getting powerbombed down and a super Celtic Cross getting two.

Cole is right back by kicking the knee out and hitting a Shining Wizard for two of his own. Sweet Chin Music (well you knew that was coming) is loaded up but Drew drops Cole with the Futureshock. Back up and Cole superkicks Shawn by mistake, meaning the Claymore gets a very delayed two. Cue Fish and O'Reilly to stomp Drew down for a bit but the comeback

bumps Shawn again. Shawn is up fast enough to superkick O'Reilly and it's a swinging Futureshock (cool) into the Claymore to retain the title at 15:12.

**Rating:** B. This was almost more about Shawn than anything else and that's just fine. Shawn was a special attraction in this one and really, he's more interesting than a house show title match. I'm sure Cole is going to be back in the title hunt eventually (around Brooklyn against Gargano would be a nice choice) and Drew should be on the main roster once he gets back from injury. There's nothing left for him to do in NXT and his size is way too much for the rest of the roster.

Quick look at Almas winning the title the next night, during which Drew suffered a bad arm injury.

Almas is ready to face Johnny Gargano, who he insulted after Gargano won the title shot last week.

We look back at Asuka's NXT career from her debut to vacating the title.

Package on the women's division, including looks at the Iconic Duo, Lacey Evans, Kairi Sane, Bianca Belair, Vanessa Bourne, Shayna Baszler and Nikki Cross.

Last week, Sane made it clear that she wants the title but got choked out by Baszler.

Baszler debuts next week.

Video on WarGames, which really was the carnage that it should have been. I know it wasn't quite the match that a lot of people were expecting but it was still a heck of a performance with some rather memorable spots. Let the WWE have its own version rather than a watered down version of the WCW style, which wouldn't work today anyway.

We look back at the injured Tommaso Ciampa explaining why he turned on Gargano at Takeover: Chicago. DIY was supposed to have a moment but Ciampa hurt his knee during a match. Fans started talking about Johnny wrestling on his own and that's not what Ciampa wanted, hence the betrayal. However, during the ladder match, Ciampa tore his ACL in the

match and would be out for the rest of the year.

Video on last week's fatal four way with Gargano becoming #1 contender, earning a shot at Takeover: Philadelphia.

Also set for Philadelphia: Adam Cole vs. Aleister Black. I'm not sure Black wins that one and that makes things more interesting.

Gargano talks about his rough 2017, which started at such a high but then came crashing down around him, including the DIY split and all the losses that followed. He always knew he could do it though and 2018 is going to be the best year of his life. It makes sense to give Gargano this kind of focus as there's no doubt that he's going to be one of the top stars in NXT in 2018, likely holding the title at some point. He had a rocky 2017 but the performances were always there.

Here are the categories for NXT's End of the Year Awards

Takeover of the Year

Match of the Year

Tag Team of the Year

Breakout Star of the Year

Male Competitor of the Year

Female Competitor of the Year

Future Star of NXT

Rivalry of the Year

Overall Competitor of the Year

We get a long profile on Ember Moon, which started with her growing up in Texas watching wrestling with her grandfather. She went to train with Booker T. but got shot down in her first WWE tryout. WWE told her she didn't have the Diva look (read as: she's not a blonde model more than likely) but Norman Smiley say something in her. She stuck with Booker's

Reality of Wrestling promotion and developed a following, eventually earning herself a job after a second tryout.

Moon debuted with her crazy entrance and the Eclipse and was off to the races. Eventually she lost to Asuka though and it crippled some of her confidence, only to win the vacant title a few months later. Moon talks about knowing she can do it and being ready for anything to end the show. I remember watching an episode of the Reality of Wrestling show and thinking she was the standout star of the show. It turned out that she had already been signed by the time I saw it so maybe I have an eye for talent.

**Overall Rating:** B-. Normally I never know what to do for a Best Of show but this actually had some effort put in, which is a nice touch. They covered a lot here and I can appreciate the extra time being spent on something like this instead of just throwing a bunch of matches out there to fill in time. They even managed to add in extra stuff for next week and hype the Takeover because that's what NXT knows how to do.

The exclusive match was fun and made the show feel special, but I really liked the profile on Moon. We really don't know much about her and if there's one thing WWE knows how to nail, it's introducing you to a character and making them feel important. That's what I got out of Moon and that's what WWE needed to do more than anything else with her. Good show here, and the new year should be off to a hot start.

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# Heading Back To New Orleans

Got my ticket today for the third Wrestlemania in a row. More shows coming of course and as always, thank you all for being here for me as I couldn't pull this off without you.

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# Wrestlemania XXXIV Might Be Coming to New Orleans

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/rumor-location-wrestlemania-xxxiv-confirmed/>

If so, that's three in a row for me. Would anyone else be going?