

# New E-Book: NXT: The Full Sail Years Volume II

I think it's safe to say that you've heard a thing or two about NXT. Over the last few years the promotion, originally designed as little more than a dumping ground for the young talent brought into the company, has become the hottest promotion in the world. The weekly TV show has become a highlight and must see for most wrestling fans as new talent from all over the world shows up, almost making it an independent all-star promotion under the WWE banner. This isn't even starting to look at the live specials on the WWE Network.

In this book, I'll be taking a look at over one hundred and thirty NXT shows, including every live special they've aired to date. This ranges from the first live special in February 2014 with Arrival and goes all the way through Takeover: Dallas with every episode of the TV show included in between. I'll be including play by play and analysis as we take a look at what helped make NXT the hottest thing in the world of professional wrestling. Also, all of the live specials have been redone with new reviews.

The book is the longest I've ever put together at over 580 pages on a Kindle and sells for \$3.99 or the equivalent in other currencies. In case you don't have a Kindle, there are plenty of **FREE** apps you can get from Amazon for pretty much any electronic device, all of which are available at this [link](#).

You can pick up the book from Amazon [here](#).

From the UK Amazon [here](#).

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Or if you're in another country with its own Amazon page, just search "NXT Full Sail II" and it should be the first thing to come up.

Also you can still get any of my previous books on the WWE Championship, the Intercontinental Championship, Monday Night Raw from 1997, 1998 and 2001, Monday Nitro from 1995-1998, In Your House, Summerslam, Starrcade,

ECW Pay Per Views, Royal Rumble, Saturday Night's Main Event, the WWF and WCW pay per views from 1998, Wrestlemania and Clash of the Champions at my author's page [here](#).

I hope you like it and shoot me any questions you might have.

KB

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## New Column: The Evolution Isn't A Mystery

This may sound familiar.

<http://www.wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-evolution-isnt-mystery/35309/>

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## NXT – April 8, 2015: Let's Go Hideo!

### NXT

Date: April 8, 2015

Location: San Jose Convention Center, San Jose, California

Commentators: Rich Brennan, Corey Graves

We're on the road again with some matches taped for this year's Wrestlemania Axxess weekend. For at least the last two years, there has been a ring set up on the Axxess floor for live matches, including some

title defenses. Tonight we're going to see some of those matches and maybe some from the well received house show the same weekend. Let's get to it.

The main story tonight is a tournament for a spot in the Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal at Wrestlemania XXXI. Here are the brackets.

Finn Balor

Baron Corbin

Bull Dempsey

Tyler Breeze

Hideo Itami

Jason Jordan

Kalisto

Adrian Neville

Video of Wrestlemania's impact on the area, which I believe was shown on both Raw and Smackdown.

We get a quick recap of the first round to give us the final four.

Balor rolled up Corbin to advance, Breeze beat Dempsey with a Beauty Shot, Itami's running kick to the face knocked Jordan out and the Red Arrow advanced Neville.

Here are the updated brackets.

Finn Balor

Tyler Breeze

Hideo Itami

Adrian Neville

Battle Royal Qualifying Tournament Semi-Finals: Hideo Itami vs. Adrian

## Neville

Neither guy gets an entrance. The crowd is very small, maybe about 200, as the ring is just tucked away in a corner of the convention center. They fight over a wristlock to start with Neville taking him down to the mat but Itami counters into an arm crank for a near fall of his own. The fans boo something off camera as the guys have a staredown and Neville teases going after whoever it was.

We hit the dueling chants as Neville grabs a headlock. That goes nowhere so Hideo hits a running kick to the chest and clotheslines Neville out to the floor. Neville makes it back in at nine and the fans don't seem thrilled with him. Some shots to the chest and a big back elbow get two on Hideo but he comes back with his three clotheslines (of course) and the tornado neck snap across the top rope.

The top rope clothesline gets two and Itami follows up with a sleeper (Fans: "GO TO SLEEP!") before switching off to a dragon sleeper. The GTS is countered and Neville blasts him with a superkick for two. Neville has to bail out of a shooting star and gets caught by the running dropkick in the corner. The Shotgun Kick sends Itami to the finals at 11:16.

**Rating:** C+. Good enough but Itami really needs to open up the offense. First it was nothing but kicks and now it's primarily clotheslines. Star throwing in some more submissions or throws or whatever, but stop using one or two moves over and over. Neville was working heel here and it was kind of odd to see. Not bad or anything but just a sharp change from his usual style.

## Battle Royal Qualifying Tournament Semi-Finals: Finn Balor vs. Tyler Breeze

Balor gets an entrance. Breeze poses on the corner to start so Balor dropkicks him in the face and poses exactly the same. More kicks to the chest get two on Breeze but he takes Balor down and puts on a chinlock (Tyler: "ASK HIM PLEASE!"). Balor quickly rolls through and hits a basement dropkick, followed by even more kicks to the face and chest for two. We definitely have a theme in this match. Breeze finally mixes it up with some forearms but charges into the Sling Blade. The Coup de Grace

ends Breeze at 5:22.

**Rating:** C+. It's very telling how much more of a presence Balor has in half the time that Itami had. The guy is just awesome in the ring and has the full package. Even though the match was nothing special and Breeze was basically getting squashed for five minutes, it felt more entertaining than the previous match.

Dana Brooke debuts next week and calls herself the Total Diva.

Video package on the NXT house show from Wrestlemania weekend and it looks like a big Ring of Honor show, just with HHH in the ring. It really is amazing that WWE basically has their own in house indy company. This show looks like a blast.

Sami Zayn vs. Rhyno next week.

#### Battle Royal Qualifying Tournament Final: Hideo Itami vs. Finn Balor

We get a wide shot of the arena to show several hundred more people on the hard camera side. The fans are behind Balor as the guys do a wrestling sequence, ending with a standoff. Balor takes him down and cranks on the arm before a dropkick gets two. Itami comes back with some kicks to the chest and puts on a chinlock. That goes as far as a chinlock can take you and Finn rolls out for another basement dropkick.

An enziguri in the corner knocks Hideo off the top for two but he comes back with the top rope clothesline. The GTS is teased again but Balor escapes into the Pele to put both guys down again. Back up and Hideo wins a strike off, followed by a running basement dropkick in the corner. The Sling Blade out of nowhere drops Itami but he crotches Finn to break up the Coup de Grace. Yet another GTS attempt is countered and the Shotgun Kick sends Hideo to Wrestlemania at 8:15.

**Rating:** C. I wasn't feeling this one as much as they built up the GTS through the match but they still didn't let it hit. I'm glad Hideo won though as having Balor in his spot at Wrestlemania would have been a waste of him. All the kicks are getting annoying too and it's really hard to care when it's the same stuff all show long. Good enough match but it

didn't have the time to get anywhere.

They shake hands post match.

We get a cool video on Hideo Itami, dating back to his press conference in Osaka, announcing his signing with WWE. Then he debuted in NXT, then he beat Balor in the match from earlier on this show. We see Itami going through the curtain to be greeted by the contingent of HHH, Tatsumi Fujinami and.....Hillbilly Jim?

Itami introduces us to his family and again, his English is fine. His language skills really aren't an excuse for his lack of promos. You can keep them short and get the point across well enough. Also included is a clip of Itami hitting the GTS on Breeze at the house show and how people freaked out online. Naturally, Stephanie is RIGHT THERE to comment on the impact on social media.

Itami is in the battle royal. We see him warming up backstage and all his friends praising him for making it this far this fast. He comes out to the crowd, Cole gives him a special introduction, he knocks out Dallas, and then Big Show treats him like any given jobber as Cole says "welcome to the big leagues." I'm SO glad we got to see him beaten down that fast. It just wouldn't have been complete without seeing Big Show looking dominant. Hideo cries once he gets backstage and a bunch of people congratulate him. Even Big Show says he looks forward to working with Itami again. His kids hug him to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C+. This is a hard one to grade as it's mainly a theme show with some wrestling included. The stuff on Itami is a really cool feature (Big Show dominance aside) and made him look like a big deal. Above all else though, I want to focus on that house show. On the Rise and Fall of ECW, Paul Heyman talks about wanting to make his shows into a big party where the fans say "WOW! I want to go there! I want to buy my ticket and be right there in the middle of all that."

That's the feeling I got watching that house show. It looked like a blast and something I'd love to get to see. It's the feeling you don't get on Raw because NXT feels far more fan friendly and built on excitement. Like I said, it's basically an in house indy company with very little

connection to the main roster. This is a special promotion and it's going to keep going for a long time at this pace.

### Results

Hideo Itami b. Adrian Neville – Shotgun Kick

Finn Balor b. Tyler Breeze – Coup de Grace

Hideo Itami b. Finn Balor – Shotgun Kick

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# **NXT – February 18, 2015: They're Giving Me Chills**

## **NXT**

Date: February 18, 2015

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Rich Brennan, Corey Graves, Jason Albert

Last week, evil won. Kevin Owens destroyed NXT Champion Sami Zayn and powerbombed him into oblivion over and over until he just couldn't get up again, leading to the referee stopping the match and awarding the title to Owens. The question now is what is he going to do with the title, because Zayn can't possibly be back that soon. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Rival, mainly focusing on the title change.

Commissioner Regal says the title can change hand by referee's decision so the title change stands. However, Owens doesn't have authority here because he's won the title. Therefore, tonight Owens will face Adrian Neville in a non-title match as Neville hasn't earned a title match. However he has earned the right to get revenge on the man that put him in the hospital. A new era begins tonight.

Opening sequence.

Here's the new champ with something to say. The fans are almost completely divided on their opinion of him. Some people may have issues with how he won the title, which draws a WIN OWENS WIN chant. Those people who are upset have no right to be angry at anything. He hasn't lied or pretended to be anything he isn't. He said he would fight anyone and everyone to make things better for his family and that's exactly what he did.

Who he beat and how he beat them is irrelevant because Sami Zayn is now the past. That means it's time to look to the future, and that is Finn Balor. Owens is well aware that Balor is the #1 contender for the NXT Title, so go to Regal and pick whatever date you want. However, what happened to Sami at Takeover is what's going to happen to Balor, because no one is taking this title from him. It takes a lot to instantly make me care about a new champion like this but I'm digging the heck out of this already. Hearing him say Balor is next gave me a big smile.

Rhyno vs. Elias Samson

Yes THAT Rhyno, who wins with the Gore in 33 seconds. The only note here is that the announcers said Rhyno invented the spear, which is completely inaccurate but his version has enough impact that it works like a charm. I can also totally get behind the idea of people like Rhyno showing up for short stories or even one night cameos like this for a surprise.

Finn Balor says he has a high opinion of himself too. Owens calls himself a prize fighter, but Balor fights for a prize too. Before he can finish what that is (the NXT Title), Rhyno comes in for a staredown. The fans

REALLY like that idea.

### Vaudevillains vs. Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady

Enzo and Cass get a great reaction but Carmella isn't exactly beloved by the fans. Amore now has a blond beard to go with his black handlebar mustache. Cass say they wan the titles. Gotch grabs Amore's foot to start but English gets in a cheap shot to give the Vaudevillains early control. Aiden stomps away but Enzo ducks a clothesline and dives over for the tag. The big man cleans house and throws English into the corner. Enzo is thrown onto him for good measure and Cass' big boot is good for the pin at 2:03.

Blake and Murphy pop up on screen and say that's not enough for a title shot before hitting on Carmella.

Adrian Neville says he can be the hunter tonight and he wants revenge for Owens putting him on a stretcher.

Bayley says her night is coming.

Becky Lynch gave it her all last week but Bayley cost her the title. At least Charlotte lost.

Here's a ticked off CJ Parker to rant about not being on the show last week. He's ending this show by taking it hostage, meaning he starts tying caution tape across the ring. Cue the long awaited debut of Solomon Crowe who quickly destroys Parker and returns us to our regularly scheduled broadcast. As usual with NXT debuts, this worked.

### Sasha Banks vs. Blue Pants

Non-title and Blue Pants is billed from the clearance rack. Sasha offers her the chance to leave but Blue knocks her out to the floor. A rollup gets two on the Boss but she cranks on Blue's arms to take her down. Sasha plants her down and the Bank Statement is good for the tap out at 2:30. Just a feel good moment before the squash.

Sasha says its her time.

A doctor looked at Sami and says he'll be back strong.

### Kevin Owens vs. Adrian Neville

Non-title. Owens bails to the floor at the bell but Neville is right there with him to hammer away. Back in and Neville takes him down with a kick, only to walk into a gutbuster. He hammers on Adrian with big right hands as this is starting similar to last week's title match. The fans tell Owens to fight but another faction is behind Neville. We hit the chinlock for a good while before Kevin throws Neville to the floor and us to a break.

Back with Owens stepping on Neville's head (such a simple yet effective heel move) before kicking him in the back. Another chinlock has Adrian in trouble but he fights up with more kicks and hits a springboard dropkick for two. That sends Owens outside again but this time Neville dropkicks him through the ropes, followed by a 450 from the apron. Back in and Adrian rolls some Germans for a very close two.

Owens just takes his head off with a clothesline, but the Cannonball is broken up with a superkick. A reverse hurricanrana gets two and the fans are WAY into this. The Red Arrow has to be canceled in mid air, setting up the popup powerbomb to give Owens the pin at 15:34.

**Rating:** B. This is the kind of stuff that that NXT excels at: take two guys, give them some time and let them beat each other up. Owens looked great as always and a win over Neville still means quite a bit since no one could pin him for so long. The match with Balor could tear the house down and hopefully they get a lot of time to do so.

**Overall Rating:** B+. Tonight was about setting up new stuff for NXT and they did a great job of doing so. Sami being gone opens up some room at the top of the card, but his return for revenge is still going to rock. As usual, the future looks incredibly bright in WWE and it looks even brighter for the next few months down here. Really solid show this week and a good followup to last week's classic show.

### Results

Rhyno b. Elias Samson – Gore

Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady b. Vaudevillains – Big boot to English

Sasha Banks b. Blue Pants – Bank Statement

Kevin Owens b. Adrian Neville – Popup powerbomb

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# NXT Takeover: Rival: Follow That, Wrestlemania

## **NXT Takeover: Rival**

Date: February 10, 2015

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Rich Brennan, Corey Graves, Jason Albert

It's been less than two months since the last Takeover and NXT is starting to crank up the frequency of these specials. The main story coming in is fallout from last time as Kevin Owens is challenging former best friend Sami Zayn for the NXT Title after betraying new champion Zayn at the end of the last show. Let's get to it.

The opening video gives us a quick background of every major match.

### Hideo Itami vs. Tyler Breeze

This was set up late last week after Itami lost in the semi-finals of the #1 contenders tournament and was attacked by Breeze. A blonde woman jumps Breeze during his entrance and is quickly dragged away. She was too good looking to be a real fan. Hideo misses a running kick to start but nails a clothesline out of the corner. A forearm knocks Breeze to the floor and Hideo dropkicks him out of the air. Tyler wakes up and goes after the knee to take over by ramming it into the apron and dropping some elbows. The knee is wrapped around the post and Breeze slaps on the Figure Four around the post as well.

Back in and Breeze puts on a unique submission hold which is kind of a Texas Cloverleaf/Figure Four/Sharpshooter combination. Itami gets to the ropes and tries the GTS, only to have Breeze escape and hit the Supermodel Kick for two. I guess selling doesn't translate to Japanese. Hideo starts Hulking Up and kicks Breeze in the head before firing off a series of them to the chest. He is nice enough to limp a bit after doing the offense with no issues. A running delayed dropkick in the corner and a running big boot to the face is enough to pin Breeze at 8:20.

**Rating:** B-. Entertaining match but the lack of selling got annoying in a hurry. It's also not a good sign that Hideo was right back to kicks only offense. Yeah he varies them up a bit, but they're all just kicks no matter how you look at it. Breeze is getting to the point where he puts over so many people that it's not meaning as much. Itami needed a win though and this was his biggest in a singles match to date.

### Baron Corbin vs. Bull Dempsey

No DQ. Corbin charges at him to start and they fight on the floor with Dempsey hitting a suplex onto the ramp. He posts Baron as well and takes him inside, only to get caught in a spinebuster for two. Corbin charges him out to the floor where Bull runs him over again. Back in and the flying headbutt gets two on Corbin, sending a frustrated Dempsey outside for a chair. That takes a bit too long though and Corbin catches him in End of Days for the pin at 4:11.

**Rating:** C. Good brawl but my goodness let it be over now. These two

didn't need to fight again after the first two times but it kept going for the sake of having another match here. That's unlike NXT and I really hope it's nothing that becomes normal. At least the right guy won and they kept it short.

#### Tag Team Titles: Blake and Murphy vs. Lucha Dragons

Blake and Murphy beat the Dragons to win the belts a few weeks back and this is the rematch. They've also lost their first names during their title reign. Cara and Murphy get things going but it's very quickly off to Blake, who eats a spinning cross body. The champs take over and Kalisto gets the tag, only to botch a dive over the top.

Instead a victory roll gets two out of the corner before Cara slams Kalisto onto Murphy for the same. This match is kind of all over the place so far. Back to Blake as the champs take over with some fast tags and quick offense. Kalisto gets another hot tag and cleans house with his rolling kick to the head and low hurricanrana but Murphy counters the Salida Del Sol. A powerbomb gets two on Kalisto and they hit a pinfall reversal sequence until both partners make saves at the same time.

Cara rolls Blake into a powerbomb for two but Murphy rolls out for two of his own. It's quickly back to Murphy who can't roll out of the powerbomb as everything breaks down again. Kalisto is knocked off the apron and Murphy hits a running suplex on Cara, setting up a great looking frog splash from Blake to retain the titles at 7:28.

**Rating:** C. This was entertaining but kind of sloppy. They didn't really try for any kind of psychology but the champs looked smooth out there and the match worked well enough for what it was going for. Blake and Murphy are actually good champions and work well together, though I could use a big more to separate them. Still though, good enough stuff.

During the champs' celebration, we get the longest Solomon hack to date, complete with "Next week" coming up on screen.

Recap of the #1 contenders tournament, which quickly turns into a video on Neville vs. Balor. Both of them have worked hard to get here and they're ready to go through the other to get their shot at the title.

## #1 Contenders Tournament Final: Finn Balor vs. Adrian Neville

Balor does his full on painted, crawling entrance. Neville runs him over to start and grabs a headlock on the mat. That's fine with Finn who rolls through and hits a basement dropkick to the face, sending Adrian rolling out to the floor. Back in and Finn runs him over again before slapping on a chinlock. Balor escapes and goes to the apron but gets dropkicked down while trying a springboard. This is a chess match so far. A delayed suplex gets two for Adrian and it's another chinlock.

Finn is out quicker this time though and he kicks Neville out to the floor for a huge flip dive. After taking a few moments to get up, Balor slowly stalks around the ring and hits a running dropkick to send Neville through the barricade. Back in and a top rope stomps to the back of the head gets two more for Balor and frustration is setting in. Neville wins a kick off but Finn scores with a Pele to put both guys down again.

Adrian is up first and muscles Finn over for a German suplex and now it's his turn to be frustrated. A middle rope Phoenix Splash gets two on Balor but he comes back with a Sling Blade to put Adrian down again. Finn's running clothesline turns Neville inside out and a reverse implant DDT gets two more. Neville scores with a pair of kicks to the head but the Red Arrow hits knees, allowing Finn to hook a small package for a VERY close two. I totally bought that as the finish. Now it's Balor going up for a top rope double stomp to the ribs for the pin and the title shot at 13:32.

**Rating:** A. Now THIS worked. Both guys were rocking the whole time and this was one heck of a back and forth showdown. Balor is being treated as the real deal and they're doing a great job of rocketing him up the card. This was a great war with some white hot near falls with both guys looking great and topping each other until Neville just couldn't get up anymore.

They shake hands post match.

Video on the four way Women's Title match which is a pretty simple idea: Charlotte has the belt, all three other girls want it, and they're willing to fight everyone to get it.

## Women's Title: Charlotte vs. Becky Lynch vs. Bayley vs. Sasha Banks

Other than the main event, this is the match I've been looking forward to more than anything else, including Balor vs. Neville. It's a basic title feud but they've executed it so well that I want to see it. Consider that this is the company that also has the Bellas being pushed to Mars and back and you'll be even more astounded by that. It's a big brawl to start with Charlotte knocking both villains to the floor but getting rolled up for two.

Now it's Bayley getting double teamed with a double clothesline and then just being thrown into the corner. Banks and Lynch of course get into an argument over who should get the cover. Sasha turns her back on her partner though and gets launched with a kind of pumphandle throw. Lynch goes after Bayley's bad knee and puts on a kind of reverse figure four but Banks makes the save. Becky hits a missile dropkick to put Sasha down for two but it's Charlotte making the save.

The champ starts busting out neckbreakers for two each before getting in a slugout with Banks. Sasha gets the better of it and whips Charlotte into the ropes, only to have her spear Becky down. Bayley gets back in and catches Sasha in an assisted Codebreaker but Charlotte boots her in the face. Sasha sends Charlotte shoulder first into the post and drapes her over the middle rope. She puts Becky across the bottom rope for good measure and drives her knees into Charlotte's ribs to send her into Lynch for two on both of them.

Bayley throws Banks down and it's down to Bayley vs. Charlotte. A series of running elbows in the corner have Charlotte reeling and Bayley tightens the ponytail to make it serious. Bayley scores with a top rope hurricanrana and the Belly to Bayley but Becky pulls her out to the floor. That's too much for Bayley as she snaps on Lynch, only to have Sasha dive through the ropes to take both girls down.

The champ has a breather but screw that because she dives onto all three to put everyone down. Back in and Lynch hits an exploder suplex for two on Charlotte. Bayley breaks up something out of the corner and German suplexes Becky, setting up a super Belly to Bayley on Charlotte but Sasha

dives in for the save and a VERY closer near fall of her own. The Bank Statement goes on but Sasha lets go to kick Becky down. She slaps the hold on again before rolling Charlotte up in a crucifix for the pin and the title at 11:57.

**Rating:** A-. FOLLOW THAT BELLAS! I would have ended it with the stolen pin off the superplex but good grief these girls are awesome. These matches are always a highlight and it never ceases to amaze me how hard they blow the Divas out of the water. Actually check that. The NXT girls and the Divas don't belong in the same water. Awesome stuff here and the NXT girls continue to get more and more amazing every time.

Charlotte hugs the new champ post match but gets shoved away by the Boss.

We recap Zayn vs. Owens, which is all about jealousy from Owens. Sami won the belt at the last Takeover and Owens turned on him during the celebration. Owens has been there with Zayn the whole time but Sami was called up first. That title means a better life for Kevin's family and he'll do whatever it takes to win it. Sami just wants to hurt Owens no matter what it takes.

#### NXT Title: Kevin Owens vs. Sami Zayn

We get the tracking shots of both guys coming to the ring, which is a trend I'd love to see come back. After the big match intros, they stare each other down as the fans are mostly behind the champ. Owens bails to the floor to get inside Sami's head and we're in full on Zbyszko mode. Sami finally just dives over the top to take Owens down before throwing him inside for a beating. A hot shot breaks up Sami's momentum and the pro-dirty traitors strike up the FIGHT OWENS FIGHT chants.

Owens rips the skin off Sami's chest with a chop and Sami quickly loses a slugout. We hit the chinlock on the champ to get a breather before Kevin just grinds his forearm into Sami's jaw. Sami tries to fight up but gets dropped ribs first over the top rope for two. Back to the chinlock which makes sense as Kevin has been trying to grind Sami down. A hard belly to back suplex gets two and they head outside so Sami can be rammed into the apron.

The fans have switched up to KILL OWENS KILL as he takes the champ back inside to yell in his face. Owens also puts fists to his face before a gutbuster gets two. Sami jawbreaks out of the third chinlock as the announcers bring up Lesnar vs. Cena from Summerslam. That's not the longest stretch in the world. Sami fights back with some clotheslines, including a big one to send Kevin to the floor.

Now it's Owens going into the steps and getting his head taken off with a clothesline. Back in and Sami hits the Blue Thunder Bomb for two but the Helluva Kick is countered with a huge superkick. There's the Cannonball for two and the pumphandle driver onto the knee gets an even closer near fall. The popup powerbomb is countered with a dropkick and the Half and Half suplex gets two for the champ.

Kevin snaps the throat over the top rope but gets caught on the same rope, only to knock Sami down. He spits at the champ but his Swanton Bomb hits knees. The Exploder Suplex into the corner looks to set up the Helluva Kick but Owens bails to the floor. Owens can't hit the apron powerbomb so Sami hits the bouncing moonsault, only to have both guys bang their heads on the ramp. Sami can barely stand and staggers on the attempt at the Helluva Kick, allowing Owens to hit the popup powerbomb for an even closer two.

Owens just unloads with right hands to the head and the champ's eyes are glazed over. He pounds away in the ropes and keeps getting dragged away by the referee. The trainer comes out to check on Sami but Owens powerbombs Sami again. A second powerbomb has Sami out cold but he slowly rolls his shoulder up to keep this going. The trainer gets in the ring now, earning Zayn two more powerbombs. Kevin loads up a fifth in a row and the referee finally pulls him off to stop the match at 23:12, giving Owens the title.

**Rating:** A-. This was absolutely brutal and a great way to get the title off Zayn. Owens looks like a killer, but the key thing here is he could not pin Sami. This sets up a big time gimmick rematch as well as writes Sami off TV while he on the international tour during the next TV tapings. In other words, NXT has come up with a way to avoid their champion not being around for over a month of TV, because they're that

much smarter than WWE. Excellent stuff here with Sami looking like a warrior and Owens looking like the most awesome monster this side of Brock Lesnar.

Oh and next up: Owens vs. Balor.

A smiling Owens stands over Sami to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** A. Good grief. I mean just good freaking grief. How in the world does NXT manage to keep blowing away every bit of wrestling WWE can put out time after time? I'm not sure if any of the three big matches here were as good as the triple threat from the Rumble (and they likely weren't due to the stage the Rumble was on), but I'll take three awesome matches over one incredible triple threat any day.

Another outstanding show here with the wrestlers working themselves to the bone to make the whole thing work. There are stories, character development, great matches and hard work all around and there's no way that doesn't equal an excellent show. NXT is still on fire and shows no signs of slowing down with even more names on the way, like Crowe and that trio of amateur guys that have been getting rave reviews. Great stuff here and again, if this doesn't give you enough reason to buy the Network, I don't know what more you could ask for.

### Results

Hideo Itami b. Tyler Breeze – Big boot

Baron Corbin b. Bull Dempsey – End of Days

Blake and Murphy b. Lucha Dragons – Frog splash to Cara

Finn Balor b. Adrian Neville – Top rope double stomp

Sasha Banks b. Charlotte, Becky Lynch and Bayley – Rollup to Charlotte

Kevin Owens b. Sami Zayn via referee stoppage

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# NXT – February 4, 2015: The Short Form Build

## NXT

Date: February 4, 2015

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Rich Brennan, Corey Graves, Alex Riley

It's the go home show for Takeover next week and the main stories are the tournament to crown a new #1 contender and making Zayn vs. Owens a title match at Owens' demand. Tonight we have two semi-final matches with Hideo Itami vs. Finn Balor and Adrian Neville vs. Baron Corbin with the winners facing each other next week. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

## Emma vs. Carmella

The fans want Blue Pants but Carmella says she's back on the clearance rack. Enzo and Cass dance in the background while Carmella talks to a less than thrilled audience. Thankfully Cass does his spelling and the fans are right back. Carmella shouts at the guys and gets kicked down as we hit a brief catfight. Emma gets choked on the ropes and Carmella mocks her dancing while checking the nails. They fight out of the corner and the Dilemma has Carmella in even more trouble. Not that it matters as she trips Emma down and puts on that leg lock crossface for the submission at 1:52.

## #1 Contenders Tournament Semi-Finals: Adrian Neville vs. Baron Corbin

Baron easily takes him back into the corner to start and Adrian looks at him with a realization that he might be in major trouble. A cross body doesn't work but some kicks to the ribs work a bit better. Neville hits a running dropkick but gets his head taken off by a right hand. Adrian rolls outside with his bell rung but Baron throws him right back inside to stomp away in the corner.

A big slam gets two on Neville but he dropkicks the knee out to send Baron into the buckle. Neville scores with a springboard dropkick to knock Baron outside but the springboard plancha is caught with ease and Baron drops him on the barricade. With Neville going back inside, Bull Dempsey comes out and posts Baron, setting up the Red Arrow for the pin at 5:27.

**Rating:** C. For once, I really don't like the booking here. They easily could have had the posting lead to a countout (Corbin barely beat the count back in) instead of a pin, but at least it wasn't clean. That being said, does ANYONE want to see Corbin vs. Dempsey again? As Riley said, what does Corbin have left to prove against him? The match was a decent power display from Corbin but I didn't like the ending and it hurt things a good bit.

Sami Zayn says Kevin Owens played this perfectly to get what he wants. Even Regal didn't see this coming and Regal has seen it all. All that matters now is Takeover next week and Sami is bringing everything he has. Of note here: Sami said the date of the show. That's such a lost little thing in WWE today. They always say "in X amount of weeks" or something other than just the date. Say the date of the show and get it in the fans' heads instead of just the name of the show so they'll know when it's there.

Corbin vs. Dempsey next week in a No DQ match.

## Bayley vs. Becky Lynch

Bayley's music is very, very catchy. The fans aren't sure who they like better here but it seems to be Bayley with more support as she grabs an

armbar. Becky goes after Bayley's bad knee to take over and hits a nice snap suplex. Three straight legdrops get two but Bayley sends her outside.

Cue Sasha Banks as Bayley misses a charge into the post, allowing Lynch to kick at the knee again. A dragon screw leg whip looks to set up a leg lock but Bayley counters into a small package for two. I actually bought that as the pin. Bayley SNAPS and goes after Becky's leg before throwing her into a half crab, sending Lynch into the ropes. Sasha throws Becky back inside and the Belly to Bayley is good for the pin at 4:18.

**Rating:** C-. Neither girl is all that great in the ring but they're both capable of doing something passable enough to get through a ring. Lynch is far more attitude than in ring ability and there's nothing wrong with that. The four way next week has a lot of potential and while Banks winning probably makes the most sense, all four are options and that's one of the great things about NXT: it can be hard to predict sometimes, which is a very rare case in WWE.

Becky shoves Banks down as Charlotte comes out to watch.

Owens says of course it was a plan and Sami knew that's what was happening. Now he's going to take the NXT Title two months to the day of his debut.

We see a graphic for the next tournament match and the Solomon hacker screen comes up.

Blake and Murphy vs. Lucha Dragons for the Tag Team Titles next week.

Tyler Breeze is asked what his plans are now that he's out of the tournament. After calling that a stupid question, he says he's going to watch the rest of the tournament closely.

#### #1 Contenders Tournament Semi-Finals: Finn Balor vs. Hideo Itami

Neville is on commentary, which isn't something you see that often in NXT. The bell rings and the fans debut a new chant: "WE'RE NOT WORTHY!" They hit the mat to start for a nice wrestling sequence and the fans give the stalemate a big ovation. Fans: "BETTER THAN RAW!" Balor's chinlock

attempt is countered into an armbar as Graves brings up being Tag Team Champions with Neville for a nice bit of continuity. Finn scores with a dropkick and we take a break.

Back with Itami getting two and putting on a quickly broken chinlock. Balor rolls through into a hard basement dropkick for two before putting on an arm trap chinlock of his own. A pair of rollups get a pair of near falls on Itami before it's off to a chinlock. The announcers are basically interviewing Neville about what it means to be champion again and getting inside his head instead of just asking him generic questions and plugging Twitter. Hideo fights up and goes up top, only to get kicked in the head for two as we take another break.

Back again with Balor taking the skin off Hideo's chest with chops. A running knee in the corner has Balor in some quick trouble, followed by a top rope clothesline for two. The GTS is teased again but Balor escapes and they trade kicks to the head. They slug it out with Itami getting the better of it and hitting a running basement dropkick in the corner. Back up and Balor scores with a Sling Blade but he tweaked his knee on some of those kicks. It's good enough to dropkick Itami hard into the corner and the top rope double stomp is good enough to send Balor to Takeover at 17:58.

**Rating:** B. The ending was a bit abrupt but this was the kind of match both guys needed. They both held their own for a long match and it never got boring. Balor still looks better but the second that GTS finally hits, it's going to blow the roof off the place. The best part is you can't even say it's stealing anything because Punk took it from Itami in the first place. Really solid match here and Neville vs. Balor is going to rock.

Balor and Itami shake hands and Neville stares Finn down.

One last Owens vs. Zayn promo ends the show. Zayn should have seen this coming but Owens surprised him. They were the best of friends but then Owens got married and had a kid and things changed. Next week, Zayn is going to see what Owens is made of.

**Overall Rating:** B-. The earlier stuff hurt it a bit but the main event

brought the show up a good deal. More than anything else though, I want to see Takeover next week. The card is stacked and they've done a great job of building up the show in just a few weeks as opposed to the multiple months they usually have. Next week feels like new stuff crossed with an R-Evolution sequel, which is actually a cool feeling.

There are two things I want to bring up here here that continue to make NXT feel special. First of all is of course the crowd. That BETTER THAN RAW chant they started tonight kept up the feeling that the fans are having a great time every week at this show. How many times do you feel that fans coming to Raw are naturally excited to be there? It's like they show up and hope for a good show but don't expect much. When the NXT fans show up, it's time for a great show and they know it because NXT has earned that respect.

The other thing that stood out to me tonight is the commentary. Every week I have to spend the first half hour of the show figuring out who the commentary team is this week because they always rotate and it's hard to pin them down given how similar their voices are (save for Albert and Renee of course). For a long time that got on my nerves because I had to listen for them to say their first names, but the more I think about it, the more that's a good thing. The announcers are just faceless entities most of the time and that means the focus stays on the action and not on them. That's the polar opposite of WWE and it's so nice.

## Results

Carmella b. Emma – Leg lock crossface

Adrian Neville b. Baron Corbin – Red Arrow

Bayley b. Becky Lynch – Belly to Bayley

Finn Balor b. Hideo Itami – Top rope double stomp

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# NXT – January 28, 2015: It Made Sense

## NXT

Date: January 28, 2015

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Alex Riley, Jason Albert, Tom Phillips

This is another big show as we're two weeks out from Takeover and the showdown between Owens and Zayn. The contract signing is tonight and Owens has promised to say what he has to say to Zayn to his face. Also tonight the tournament to crown a new #1 contender continues with more first round matches. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Tag Team Titles: Lucha Dragons vs. Buddy Murphy/Wesley Blake

Blake and Murphy are challenging and have some new, loud entrance music. We even get big match intros before we get going. Cara and Blake get things going with Wesley slamming him down in the corner, only to have Cara come back with a double springboard wristdrag.

Murphy dropkicks him out of the air for two though as the challengers are staying aggressive. Blake puts on a chinlock for a bit until Cara fights up and makes the tag to Kalisto. Everything speeds up and a sunset bomb gets two on Buddy as everything breaks down. Blake counters Cara's springboard and makes a blind tag. Kalisto hits Salida Del Sol on Murphy but the legal Buddy rolls him up for the clean pin and the titles at 4:00.

**Rating:** C. This is where NXT's booking pays off for them in the end. Murphy and Blake haven't won a bunch of matches over the months, but they've hung in enough of them that this isn't the most shocking win in the world. In WWE, a team like Slater Gator has been crushed almost every time they go out there and would have almost no chance in a title match. Even if they won, it wouldn't be accepted. On the other hand, this was

fine and made sense, as well as giving us a fresh set of matches for the division.

We recap Bayley suplexing Charlotte last week and Regal making the fourway title match.

Charlotte yells at Bayley but Bayley says maybe she's been too nice. She saw what Sami Zayn did when he got more serious and now it's time for her to do it. Charlotte says if Bayley tries that again, she won't make it to Takeover.

Tyler Breeze is going to be watching the rest of the tournament very closely.

#### #1 Contenders Tournament First Round: Adrian Neville vs. Tyson Kidd

The fans are split on who they like best. They hit the mat to start for a nice counter sequence leading to a standoff. Adrian starts cranking on the arm before he takes Tyson down with a hurricanrana, sending Kidd scrambling to the floor. Neville even teases him with a dive but pulls back with a Tajiri handspring flip. Kidd keeps sliding under the corner and out the other side of the ring to break the count, eventually drawing Adrian outside where he gets sent into the floor.

We take a break and come back with Kidd hitting a hard dropkick to the face and rubbing the same face into the mat. Neville sends him right back outside with a clothesline and hits a big old flip dive to take him down. A standing moonsault gets two for Neville as the referee is drenched in sweat.

The spinning fisherman's neckbreaker snaps Adrian's neck for two but he flips out of a release German suplex and grabs a Batista Bomb (crowd: "Better than Batista!") for two. Neville heads outside but a hard dropkick sends him to the floor. Back in and Kidd can't hook the Sharpshooter, allowing Neville to hit a running kick in the head (similar to the Helluva Kick), setting up the Red Arrow for the pin at 16:25.

**Rating:** B+. These guys beat the heck out of each other and it got better and better throughout the match. This is the basic idea of hitting each

other really, really hard over and over again until one of them can't get up and that's a great way to enjoy a match. Really fun stuff here and worth checking out.

Neville says he's ready to face either Corbin or Dempsey. The fans seem very interested in Neville vs. Corbin. I can't say I disagree.

Becky Lynch implies she'd turn on Banks to win the title. Good, as I like her better than Sasha.

Murphy and Blake are thrilled to win the belts and would give the Lucha Dragons a rematch anytime anywhere. They're still getting the hang of this talking thing.

### Becky Lynch/Sasha Banks vs. Bayley/Charlotte

The fans aren't as into Bayley as they used to be. Bayley and Banks get things going with Bayley hitting a springboard armdrag but botching a second attempt, allowing Banks to take over. Off to Lynch for a forearm to the back before it's already back to Sasha. Charlotte comes in and snapmares Becky down before tagging Bayley right back in. In a smart move, Bayley thinks about going to the ropes but realizes <http://onhealthy.net/product-category/stop-smoking/> Banks would nail her in the back and opts for a jumping clothesline to a seated Lynch instead.

The villains use some cheating to take over and Sasha gyrates a bit, drawing a Sasha's ratchet/no she's not dueling chant. Becky comes back in and goes for the knee, only to get suplexed down, allowing the hot tag to Charlotte. She quickly gets Banks in the bridging Figure Four but Becky breaks it up as everything breaks down. Sasha Bankrupts Charlotte and Bayley makes a save but hits her partner in the process. Charlotte and Bayley start fighting each other and the opponents come in, drawing a double DQ at 5:50.

**Rating:** C. The match wasn't great but it was exactly the right booking. There was no need to have anyone get a pin here and it let Bayley show a lot more aggression. I'm still really high on Becky but she needs to show that she can do something in the ring as she's barely had any ring time so far. The fourway could be awesome if they let these four go nuts.

Hideo Itami comes up to Finn Balor in the back and says he brought Finn into the company and will take him out if he has to in order to advance in the tournament.

The returning Emma says things haven't gone as she planned since she left NXT so next week she's coming back to face Carmella.

#### #1 Contenders Tournament First Round: Bull Dempsey vs. Baron Corbin

Baron sends him into the corner to start and runs him over with a shoulder. Dempsey bails to the floor but Baron is right back on top of him to send him back inside. Back in and a corner splash has Bull in trouble and the End of Days is good for the pin at 1:31. Total squash here with Dempsey getting nothing. That almost has to end the feud.

Baron Corbin says he just took a step closer to becoming NXT Champion and next week Adrian Neville takes a step closer to being erased. Dempsey comes up and says he'll knock Corbin's teeth out. Baron just walks away. That would seem to be the way out of Baron losing clean next week.

It's time for the contract signing. The champ comes out first but Regal is hesitant to bring out Owens. Kevin comes out and Sami looks sad as much as mad. Regal isn't going to let this turn into every other contract signing in WWE because he'll cancel the match if they make any contact. The fans chant OLE and Sami signs without saying anything. Owens looks at Sami instead of the contract. Sami asks if he's just going to look at him or if Owens is going to explain why. Owens doesn't move so Sami says he'll talk about the last 12 years.

They fought with and against each other so maybe he should have seen this coming. The truth is he didn't see it coming though and he never thought it would happen on a night like R-Evolution when both of them arrived. It doesn't matter though because Sami is going to beat the heck out of him at Takeover. Owens still won't sign because he doesn't like it being a non-title match.

What Owens did at R-Evolution was business because he'll fight anyone for the right prize. That title means more money and a better life for his family, so Owens isn't doing this unless it's a title match. Regal

doesn't like Owens' last minute demands but Sami says wait a minute. Make it a title match because Owens really won't do it if he doesn't get what he wants. Regal writes something on the contract and Sami signs again. Owens eventually signs and throws the pen at Sami before leaving to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B. This show was about moving things forward for Takeover and they've done a great job. The title change was a nice surprise as it was something you almost never get on TV but it made sense. That's the tagline I would use for almost everything on this show: it made sense. It's clear that someone is paying really close attention to these stories and has planned them out step by step. That's such an important thing to do and the matches are almost always worth the payoff. Good show here and they're doing a very good job of a short build to the next Takeover.

### Results

Buddy Murphy/Wesley Blake b. Lucha Dragons – Rollup to Kalisto

Adrian Neville b. Tyson Kidd – Red Arrow

Bayley/Charlotte vs. Sasha Banks/Becky Lynch went to a double DQ

Baron Corbin b. Bull Dempsey – End of Days

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# NXT – January 14, 2015: The Best Hour Of Wrestling I Have Ever Seen

## NXT

Date: January 14, 2015

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Renee Young, Rich Brennan, Alex Riley

It's the first show on Wednesday nights and we're starting with a bang as Sami Zayn is giving Adrian Neville his rematch for the NXT Title. Kevin Owens is still lurking around and there's always a chance he could get involved. We also have the continuing story of crazy Marcus Louis stalking Tyler Breeze. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

### Tyson Kidd vs. Finn Balor

Balor has the full entrance minus the face paint, which is still awesome. On another note, does Charles Robinson age? He looks identical to how he looked back in 1999. Balor starts with a running dropkick at the bell but misses a top rope stomp. That's fine with Finn as he takes Tyson into the corner for a running basement dropkick, sending Kidd out to the floor. The Irishman follows but gets speared into the barricade for a loud crash. The fans seemed to like that one and I can't say I disagree.

Kidd has dedicated this match Charlotte. His cat, not the wrestler. Back in and Kidd shouts at Finn to kill him before we take a break. We come back with Kidd catapulting him face first into the bottom buckle for two before we hit a chinlock. A dropkick in the Tree of Woe gets two for Kidd but Balor nails a Pele Kick to get a breather. I'm glad someone in WWE finally started using that move. A running sleeper drop puts Kidd down so he bails to the floor, only to have Balor nail a great flip dive.

Kidd pops back up with a running chest kick from the apron and the

springboard elbow drop for two. They're just beating the heck out of each other here. The Sharpshooter goes on but Finn finally crawls over to the ropes. A slingshot Fameasser misses Balor so he grabs a reverse Impaler, followed by the top rope double stomp to end Kidd 11:55.

**Rating:** B+. These guys were beating the tar out of each other and it was awesome. Balor has such a presence to him and is more than ready to be on the main roster. Based on that, I'd be surprised if he makes it there in the next year because WWE won't bring people up to the main show for reasons I don't understand. Granted the longer he's here and doesn't have to get "fixed" by the writers, the better he's going to be.

Package on Zayn winning the title at R-Evolution minus the post match beatdown. This is all about Neville vs. Zayn.

Bull Dempsey says he's just as undefeated as Baron Corbin and tonight will be Corbin's End of Days. The last thing he's going to hear is BULL BULL BULL.

#### Baron Corbin vs. Bull Dempsey

The fans start the counting as they hammer away on each other with Bull going down first. Thankfully the fans give up after about twenty seconds and the fight heads outside. Back in and Bull slams him down but misses his flying headbutt. End of Days is good for the pin at 1:36. This was exactly what it needed to be and Baron looked like a monster.

#### Sasha Banks/Becky Lynch vs. Natalya/Charlotte

Banks' theme song is rapidly growing on me. Natalya headlocks Becky to the mat to start before getting two off a rollup. Renee tells us about Natalya and Lynch tagging in Japan about nine years ago as the villains are sent to the floor, setting up stereo baseball slides from Natalya and Charlotte. A double delayed suplex gets two on Becky before Charlotte wheelbarrow slams Natalya on top of her for two.

Banks comes in and gets snapmared down, allowing Natalya to step on the back of her head to drive Sasha's face into the mat, immediately followed by a low dropkick. Sasha pops back up with two knees to the ribs as

things FINALLY slow down a bit. The men on the main show can't keep up a pace like that most of the time. Off to Charlotte for a neckbreaker for two as everything breaks down. Banks hits a neckbreaker of her own on Charlotte and grabs the tights for the pin at 4:20. Banks: "I WON!!!"

**Rating:** B-. I really wanted more of this as Charlotte and Natalya were looking like a polished team out there while Lynch and Banks have more than enough attitude to carry themselves. I still want to see more from Lynch as she has a great look and persona, but Banks is getting almost all of the spotlight, which she certainly deserves.

NXT Title: Sami Zayn vs. Adrian Neville

Sami is defending. They shake hands to start and Sami scores first with an armdrag. The champ hooks a headlock but charges into an armdrag, sending him out to the floor for a second. Back in and Neville sends him into the corner but gets caught in his third headlock in three minutes. Sami leapfrogs over Adrian and avoids a dropkick, sending Neville into his first frustration of the match.

Adrian slaps him in the face and Neville says he's sorry. Sami says sorry and forearm him in the face, starting the slugout with Neville getting the better of it and sending the champ to the floor. A big dive puts Sami down again as we take a break. Back with Neville hitting a running uppercut in the corner for two and hooking a hurricanrana for an even closer near fall.

Sami grabs the leg to block the Red Arrow but Neville won't let him hit the Blue Thunder Bomb. The power of OLE lets Sami force him up on the second try but Neville kicks out again. Zayn rolls some Germans but Neville flips out of a chicken wing/half nelson suplex. Neville cartwheels onto Sami's shoulders and snaps off one of the hardest hurricanranas you'll ever see for two. The referee has to check if Sami can continue but he shakes his head yes.

Zayn half pops up into a Koji Clutch attempt but Neville rolls away, only to have to bail outside to avoid the Helluva Kick. Sami loads up the diving DDT through the ropes but Neville superkicks him into a state of shock. Back in and Adrian has to bail out of the Red Arrow but avoids

another Helluva Kick into a sweet bridging rollup for two. Sami goes into Beast Mode and grabs the exploder suplex followed by the Helluva Kick for the pin at 13:56.

**Rating:** A. This was a completely different kind of match than the title change. While that one was about the drama and storytelling, this was about two guys beating the living tar out of each other and actually making me believe the title was in jeopardy. Outstanding match here and both guys come out looking awesome.

Sami celebrates but Owens comes in with a pop up powerbomb and puts his boot on Sami's face. Owens kicks the title over to Zayns' head to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** A+. This was as good of an hour of wrestling television as I've ever seen. Ignoring a 96 second power brawl (which was entertaining as well), the worst match would have been the best Divas match on the main roster in probably six months. Between Balor and Kidd just beating the heck out of each other and Neville and Zayn beating the heck out of each other even harder, I haven't had this good of a time watching a show since....oh I'd say the last big NXT show. Go out of your way to see this episode as they debuted on Wednesday with a major bang.

### Results

Finn Balor b. Tyson Kidd – Top rope double stomp

Baron Corbin b. Bull Dempsey – End of Days

Sasha Banks/Becky Lynch b. Natalya/Charlotte – Neckbreaker to Charlotte

Sami Zayn b. Adrian Neville – Helluva Kick

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# NXT – January 8, 2015: I Want To Be A Sami Zaniac

## NXT

Date: January 8, 2015

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Rich Brennan, Corey Graves, Alex Riley

One of the many things I like about this show is they set up something for next week almost every time. In this case, we have three things, ranging from Itami vs. Curtis Axel to the Vaudevillains getting their rematch from R-Evolution to the return of Sami Zayn for the first time since he was laid out by Owens. That sounds like a stacked show so let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's the champ to get things going. Sami gets ready to talk but leaves the ring to go be with the crowd and hold up the title. A YOU DESERVE IT chant stops him again before he gets to talk about what this title means. In anyone else's hands, it means you're the best. In his hands though, it means you can do it your way and keep doing it how you want because the proof is right here.

He's going to hate himself for saying this, but this title isn't his. It belongs to both him and the fans. Everyone here is part of a band called Sami Zayn and the Zaniacs. The fans start the OLE chant and Sami loves that song. Takeover was the best night of his life, but it didn't end like he wanted it to. Owens cried on his shirt that night and then hurt Sami really bad. He may have hurt Sami, but the champ is right back here, ready to defend the title.

This brings out Adrian Neville who says they tore each other to pieces last time and Zayn was the better man. Neville saw a new Sami and he's now the champion so congratulations. Sami appreciates it and is pretty sure Neville is entitled to a rematch. This brings out William Regal to congratulate them on having such a great match at R-Evolution. There will

indeed be a rematch and it takes place next week on the first Wednesday show.

The Vaudevillains can't wait to right the wrong from Takeover and prove their manliness.

### Hideo Itami vs. Curtis Axel

Axel is trying to be the last real man in wrestling. At this point point there are almost enough of those to make a stable. Itami scores with the early kicks but Axel takes him into the corner and hits a series of clotheslines to the back of the head. A chinlock doesn't get Curtis anywhere but a knee to the jaw gets two. Axel throws Hideo down and asks who cares about Itami.

Curtis slaps on an armbar out of nowhere (no arm work so far into the match so let's ignore the neck work and go after the arm) but Hideo fights out and nails a clothesline of his own. Itami loads up a tornado DDT but instead jumps to the apron to snap Axel's throat across the top rope. The top rope clothesline is good for two but Axel tries the PerfectPlex. That goes nowhere so Itami snapmares him down and hits something like Trouble in Paradise to a kneeling Axel for the pin at 5:45.

**Rating:** C-. Not bad here and Hideo is starting to round into form as a singles guy. The clotheslines are a nice alternative to the kicks and it really opens up his offense quite a bit. It's also nice to see him finally have a finisher, even if it's the same move he does more often than any other. Axel as the new version of Tyson Kidd would be a fine role for him as he's talented in the ring but needs to reestablish himself after the last few years.

Tyson Kidd is getting ready in the back so Natalya tries to intercept Byron Saxton. A Total Divas interview is cut off by Kidd asking if she's taken care of the cats. Natalya goes off to feed them so Kidd can talk about how important it is to become NXT Champion. That means he can be the new face of NXT, right before he replaces Sarah McLachlan as the face of the ASPCA. Kidd loves all cats, except Grumpy Cat. Fact.

Video on Bull Dempsey vs. Baron Corbin, based on who can squash jobbers faster. They face off for the first time next week.

#### Sasha Banks vs. Alexa Bliss

This is due to Banks breaking Bliss' nose a few weeks back. Alexa grabs a quick sunset flip for two but has her headscissors countered into a faceplant. Banks takes her time trash talking but stops to blast Alexa with right hands to the face. She lays Bliss across the middle rope for a double knee to the ribs, setting up the Bank Statement for the submission at 2:06.

Quick package on Neville vs. Zayn from R-Evolution.

#### Tyler Breeze vs. Chad Gable

Gable is an Olympic wrestler who has gotten rave reviews so far. Gable easily takes Breeze down to start and rides him with a front facelock. The fans are WAY into Chad to start as Graves won't confirm or deny that he runs Breeze's fan club. Breeze fights up and takes him down for a chinlock while throwing in some trash talk to the Uggo. Gable gets to his feet and throws on an armbar over the top rope ala Alberto Del Rio. He breaks at four and Breeze is TICKED, setting up the Beauty Shot for the pin at 2:37. Gable looked good out there in the limited time he had.

Finn Balor is looking forward to facing Tyson Kidd next week, but Kidd is going to need more than nine lives to survive. Fact. Simple, yet effective. Why is that so lost on the main show writers?

We see a still from Breeze's post match celebration, showing an ominous face peeking out from the curtain to look at him. It's not clear whose face it is.

#### Tag Team Titles: Lucha Dragons vs. Vaudevillains

Vaudevillains are challenging again after the Dragons pinned the illegal man at R-Evolution. Kalisto quickly springboards onto Gotch and pounds away with right hands before it's already off to Cara. Some kind of modified Gory Stretch has Gotch in trouble as Graves says these two might be equally strong. English comes in and says the titles are coming home

with them tonight. He school boys Cara through the ropes and out to the floor for a nice move, but Kalisto sends both Vaudevillains to the floor for a big double dive.

We take a break and come back (after an announcement that Daniel Bryan will be in action on the first Thursday Smackdown) with Kalisto trying the big spinning wristlock, only to have English hold the ropes to send the masked man crashing down. Gotch gets two off a big belly to back before a double chop puts Kalisto down again.

English comes back in but gets rolled up for two, only to slap on a chinlock. Back up and Kalisto finally rolls over for the hot tag to Cara. Everything breaks down and Gotch kicks Cara in the head, only to be low bridged out to the floor. In what looked to be a botched finish, Cara lifts English up for a powerbomb and Kalisto adds a spinning clothesline to the back of the head to retain at 11:45.

**Rating:** C+. The match was fine but the ending really didn't look good. In theory it was supposed to be a clothesline to the front but it looked awkward instead of devastating. The Dragons need new opponents now, and thankfully NXT actually has some teams they could quickly build up into contenders. I'm not sure where the Vaudevillains go, but a refocus on the comedic stuff could be in order.

**Overall Rating:** C+. Not one of their stronger episodes here but they did a great job of setting up next week to look like something special. Sami's opening promo was excellent with a ton of emotion and it set up the rematch next week. I really like how NXT is able to wait things out and tease the big stuff, such as Owens showdown with Zayn. Not the match mind you but just those two in the same place at the same time. Instead of hot shotting to that, we're getting what should be a great match out of the way, instead of just jumping straight to it. WWE could learn from that, but the circumstances are a bit different up top.

## Results

Hideo Itami b. Curtis Axel – Spinning kick to the head

Sasha Banks b. Alexa Bliss – Bank Statement

Tyler Breeze b. Chad Gable – Beauty Shot

Lucha Dragons b. Vaudevillains – Powerbomb/top rope clothesline combination to English

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## 2014 Awards: Show of the Year

We'll wrap it up with another few horses race.

To begin with, I have to skip the ROH shows because I didn't see most of them. I've heard they were good to really good, but I haven't seen them.

We'll start things off with a show that gets a lot of hate: the Royal Rumble. Unfortunately the only thing people remember about this show is the really questionable ending, along with the crowd's reaction to it. What they forget is a great opener between Bryan and Wyatt, Brock Lesnar just DESTROYING Big Show and not even going down from the KO Punch and a good Cena vs. Orton match that the fans didn't want to see.

What people also forget is a good Rumble for about 95% of the match before Mysterio's music hit. Those last three or so minutes crippled what was going to be a good to very good match with Reigns breaking what was seen as a fairly untouchable record and some other entertaining parts. All people remember about it is no Bryan and Batista winning though and

that ruins the memory of an otherwise great show.

Before we head down to developmental, I have to at least mention the post Wrestlemania Raw. It didn't have the best wrestling, but the moments on that show carried it to greatness. You have the fans singing JOHN CENA SUCKS to the tune of his theme song to get the show going. That alone should tell you that we're in for something special. Rob Van Dam returned, Rusev had his real debut, Warrior had his incredible farewell promo, Paige debuted and won the title and Shield turned face to end the show. The wrestling wasn't great, but it was such a fun show that it warrants a mention.

That brings us to NXT, which set one heck of a standard this year with the Takeover shows. We'll start at the beginning with the beginning at Arrival. This was back when we didn't know what was coming with these shows and had our minds blown. Cesaro vs. Zayn was a classic and showed what Zayn and this promotion in general were capable of. You couple that with a really good ladder match main event where Adrian Neville took the title from Bo Dallas. This show would be up there for surprise of the year but it's worth mentioning here too.

Now we get to the big shows, including Takeover: R-Evolution which blew the doors, roof, windows and pretty much everything else off the house. The show went from Kevin Owens being somehow even better than we were expecting to Finn Balor being a freaky dragon thing to Charlotte and Sasha Banks continuing the tradition of great women's matches on these shows. Somehow that all paled in comparison to the main event though, as Sami Zayn defeated Adrian Neville for the NXT Title in my Match of the Year. Couple all that with the excellent surprise ending of Owens turning on Zayn and you have one of the best shows of the year.

I think the winner should be obvious at this point. When WWE actually puts an effort into the big shows, they know how to hit them out of the park. Well this year, they put a lot of effort into Wrestlemania XXX and the show was one of the best of all time. After an excellent pre-show match for the Tag Team Titles, Hulk Hogan, Steve Austin and The Rock appeared in the ring at the same time. I remember saying to a fan next to me that I could go home now and get my money's worth.

This was followed by some excellent music video packages for the major matches, Daniel Bryan having the performance of a lifetime, Cesaro having what should have been a career changing performance, an incredible entrance for Bray Wyatt and the Streak coming to an end. What else could you possibly ask for from a major show? It was outstanding stuff and one of the best shows I've ever seen.