

# Takeover: Philadelphia Preview

It's time, once again, for everybody to come about the NXT train. This weekend WWE is doing another one of its big multi-night marathons in a single city and it all starts with NXT "Takeover: Philadelphia". As usual, there's a five match card with all three titles on the line and two other matches to fill out the card. If this thing can live up to the rest of NXT's Takeover efforts, this should be excellent. Let's get to it.

## Tag Team Titles: Undisputed Era(c) vs. Authors of Pain

I could have sworn that this was supposed to be a cage match. These teams (along with Sanity) have been feuding on and off for months with the Undisputed Era coming away with the titles for the time being. However, the Authors of Pain are arguably the most dominant team in the history of NXT so there's a real chance that they could get the titles back here.

That being said, I'm taking the Undisputed Era as there's no reason to keep the Authors of Pain in NXT any longer (save for a feud with the debuting War Machine). The champs retaining and finally establishing themselves as the best of the three teams is the way to go and makes whoever can take them down look that much better. The match should be fun with the Undisputed Era cheating to win like they're supposed to.

## Women's Title: Ember Moon(c) vs. Shayna Baszler

This is an interesting one in that it's not the most interesting thing in the world. Baszler has only been around for a few weeks now and is already one of the best characters in all of NXT. She knows exactly how to play the outsider bully, mainly because it feels so natural for her. Throw in the good looking choke and it's hard to argue against her. On

the other hand though, Moon doesn't really have a character. She has intense eyes and that's really about it, but she's Asuka's successor.

I'm going to take Moon retaining via DQ here, though seeing Baszler choke her out for the title wouldn't shock me. More than likely though, Baszler chokes her out but won't let go and loses the title as a result. The problem right now is that aside from Kairi Sane, there isn't another face to put the title on so Moon is probably the best option. Baszler will get the title one day though.

### **Kassius Ohno vs. Velveteen Dream**

Ohno is a very valuable thing to have on the roster: the grizzled veteran who can wrestle a solid match while putting someone young over and making them look good at the same time. Dream is in need of a big win at the moment, having lost at "Takeover: WarGames" to Aleister Black and last week on "NXT" to Johnny Gargano. I think you get where I'm going with this.

Of course it's going to be Dream winning and there's really no doubt about this one. Throw him out there in the opener and let him take a bunch of big forearms to the head before hitting the Purple Rainmaker for the pin. It's a simple idea and the fans are going to eat up Dream's stuff, especially after his previous two great performances. Easy winner here though.

### **Aleister Black vs. Adam Cole**

Extreme Rules. This might be the most interesting match on the show and there's a very good chance that it's going to be the best as well. Black is one of the best acts in NXT at the moment with one of the best finishers but Black is more of an acquired taste. He's a great talker, but at the same time he needs to be able to do something in the ring to back that up.

I'm going to take Black here but Cole winning is a

possibility, especially with Bobby Fish and Kyle O'Reilly available to run interference if necessary. I could see Black getting screwed out of the title, but Black getting an NXT Title shot in New Orleans makes a lot of sense as well, meaning he should win here. I'll take Black in a match that really could go either way.

### **NXT Title: Andrade Cien Almas(c) vs. Johnny Gargano**

This is a different kind of story as they have a past together and there's a future for both guys but at the same time there isn't much going on between them at the moment. Gargano won a competition to become #1 contender and is in the middle of a huge redemption story and Almas feels more like a transitional champion, even though he's kind of redeeming himself at the same time.

That being said, Almas retains here when Tommaso Ciampa runs in for the interference and costs Gargano his chance at becoming champion. That sets up the mother of all grudge matches in New Orleans while Almas retains the title and gets to face Black, who can kick his head off and win the title...I think. It should be a fun match as they surprised me in Brooklyn, but I'm not sure they can top what they did there.

Overall, "Takeover: Philadelphia" doesn't seem like the best show on paper. Nothing really jumps off the page at me but that's been the case before and NXT has blown me away almost every time. Almas' time on top hasn't been the most thrilling in the world but they'll set something up to get things going soon enough, because that's how NXT does things. Let them show what they can do and everything will be fine.

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# NXT – January 10, 2018: This Doesn't Feel Right

## NXT

Date: January 10, 2018

Location: Center Stage Theater, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Nigel McGuinness, Percy Watson

We're on some hallowed ground tonight as NXT heads to the former home of WCW Saturday Night. The next three shows will be all about setting up Takeover: Philadelphia, which means we need some more matches announced. A good chunk of the card is already set but NXT somehow manages to make the shows building to the big show entertaining as well. Let's get to it.

The Undisputed Era is ready to start their year of dominance by taking out Sanity once and for all tonight. Adam Cole is ready to start becoming the next NXT Champion. Simple and to the point here with something that you would expect them to say. Just ignore the whole "the beginning of the era of undisputed" making O'Reilly sound like Yoda.

Opening sequence.

The ring is turned to the side here, meaning wrestlers come to a corner when they come down the aisle. It's an awesome visual and feels

different, which is where NXT excels.

### Shayna Baszler vs. Dakota Kai

This is both of their NXT in-ring debuts. Before the match we see a clip of Baszler randomly attacking Performance Center trainees for fun because that's the kind of villain she is. Baszler drives her into the corner to start and takes Kai down into an armbar. A stomp bends Kai's arm at a NASTY angle and that's a referee stoppage at 1:23. Total squash and Baszler looked awesome here.

Post match Baszler stays on her until Ember Moon makes the save.

The Authors of Pain are ready to take care of the Street Profits. Since when can the Authors speak English?

General Manager William Regal talks to Baszler, saying that's not going to get her a title shot. Baszler: "We done here?"

### Kassius Ohno vs. Raul Mendoza

They even shake hands to start in a really old school move. Ohno grabs some rollups for a few early near falls but Mendoza is too fast. Mendoza hurricanranas him into a side roll but gets his head elbowed off without too much effort. An inverted Gory Special has Mendoza in more trouble until he reverses into a victory roll.

Back up and Ohno charges into a forearm in the corner, followed by a springboard spinning armdrag to drop Kassius again. Mendoza is showing off some very nice high flying here, which is exactly what he should be doing in a match like this. Ohno shrugs him off though and the High Tension Elbow Strike (running jumping elbow to the back of the head) ends Mendoza at 4:26.

**Rating:** C. This is the kind of thing that both guys needed. Ohno isn't exactly a star in NXT but he's great for a role like this: making people look good and using his experience to put together some better matches. Mendoza on the other hand is a rather good high flier and can showcase himself well around here. Mentioning that he's been in so many matches against top quality talent shows that they're likely to give him a win

soon, which could lead somewhere for him.

Zelina Vega held a mini press conference saying she and Andrade Cien Almas aren't worried about Johnny Gargano after beating him twice. That's a fairy tale and Almas is reality. Vega is amazing at this condescending heel stuff and she's made Almas that much better.

Johnny Gargano is thrilled to be #1 contender but here's Velveteen Dream to interrupt. Dream wants a thank you for allowing Gargano to get his spot in the competition because Dream would have won it with ease. Gargano needs to thank him because Dream deserves his spot.

The Street Profits loudly come into Regal's office and think they deserve a Tag Team Title shot. Regal seems to agree so next week it's the Street Profits vs. the Authors of Pain in a #1 contenders match. More loudness ensues and Regal smiles.

#### Lio Rush vs. Lars Sullivan

This could hurt a lot. Rush dodges to start and even slaps Lars in the face. A kick to the jaw staggers Sullivan for a bit but he pulls Rush into the ropes to take over. Rush gets whipped hard into the corner but Lars misses a charge. That's about it for Rush though as one heck of a clothesline turns him inside out, followed by the Freak Accident for the pin at 1:54.

Post match Sullivan talks about destroying everyone until he ran into a different kind of force. That was Killian Dain and Sullivan wants to see him again. For now though, Rush takes a super Freak Accident to really hammer home the punishment.

The Undisputed Era has attacked Sanity in the back. The Era says that's it for the title shot.

Here's the Undisputed Era in the arena for a chat. Cole thinks they're missing something and Kyle asks where Sanity is. Maybe they forgot about their title shot tonight. Cole says they kicked the chaos out of Sanity but here's a livid Nikki Cross trying to get at the Era. Referees hold her back but so Regal comes out to cut the Era off again. The boss says

the titles are on the line tonight and here's Roderick Strong to say he'll fight right now. Strong offers to go find a partner but someone interrupts to say he'll do it.

#### Tag Team Titles: Undisputed Era vs. Roderick Strong/Aleister Black

The teams are at different corners than the usual WWE formula with the champs on the left side closer to the hard camera. I don't remember the last time I've seen the corners changed in WWE. Fish and O'Reilly are defending and get cleared to the floor, sending us to a break before the bell.

Back with the bell ringing and Black kicking away at both champs. A knee to Kyle's head gets two and Strong adds a dive to the floor. Back in and Black's Oklahoma roll gets two on Kyle, followed by an armbar to keep him in trouble. Strong comes in for a chinlock as the champs are still looking for their first offense. Fish finally takes Black's knee out and we take a break.

Back with Kyle holding the knee and Fish adding a slingshot hilo for two. An exploder suplex gives Fish two but Black kicks O'Reilly away. There's the double tag to bring in Strong and Fish as everything breaks down. The champs' Ax and Smash is broken up with a jumping knee to the face and everyone is down. Cue Cole to go after Black, who stalks him into the crowd. Back inside, the champs go High/Low to retain at 11:50.

**Rating:** C+. This didn't feel like the standard NXT main event but maybe they're saving the Sanity match for another time. It was entertaining for what it was though and thankfully NXT is smart enough to not put the titles on a thrown together team like you would see so often on the main shows. Fine main event, but it felt more like a big time house show.

Post match Black comes in for the brawl but gets taken out. An AA onto an open chair knocks Black cold. The Era poses but here's Regal to talk about Philadelphia's extreme history. At Takeover: Philadelphia, Cole vs. Black will be an Extreme Rules match. Cole and Regal stare each other down to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C+. This show felt a little off from the norm for NXT but

it still did everything it needed to do. The big story here was the arrival of Baszler (nailed it) and some more matches being teased for Takeover. NXT can fill in the gaps over the next few weeks and that's where they shine. Good enough show, but it didn't feel like it had the same flow that most of their episode do.

### Results

Shayna Baszler b. Dakota Kai via referee stoppage

Kassius Ohno b. Raul Mendoza – High Tension Elbow Strike

Lars Sullivan b. Lio Rush – Freak Accident

Undisputed Era b. Roderick Strong/Aleister Black – High/Low to Strong

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# **NXT – December 27, 2017: Johnny Cinderella**

**NXT**

Date: December 27, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Nigel McGuinness, Percy Watson, Mauro Ranallo

I know I say this a lot but it's a big night around here. This time around we have the four way match for the #1 contendership to the NXT Title as Johnny Gargano, Lars Sullivan, Killian Dain and Aleister Black fight for a shot at Andrade Cien Almas. That should be a nice way to wrap up the year so let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

#### Street Profits vs. Chris Star/Riley Apex

Those are some rather jobberish names. Ford and we'll say Star start things off with a shoulder dropping Chris. It's off to Dawkins for some rapid fire high fiving. A corner splash crushes Apex and it's the spinebuster into a frog splash to give Ford the pin at 1:49. Total squash with the only noteworthy moment being Apex having a fitting description of NWO JBL.

The Profits hit the crowd and say they want the titles in 2018. It's not like they're getting anywhere else squashing jobbers so this works.

#### Women's Title: Sonya Deville vs. Ember Moon

Moon is defending. Deville goes straight for a kneebar but Moon is way too close to the ropes. Back up and they both miss some kicks to give us a standoff. A dropkick puts Deville on the floor for a breather as Moon is seemingly a bit hesitant to follow up. Moon speeds things back up with a dive off the apron to the floor and we take a break.

Back with Deville striking away and grabbing a waistlock. Moon finally sends her face first into the turnbuckle for a breather but can't follow up. Some hard strikes to the chest give Moon two more and a springboard dropkick has Deville in more trouble. The Eclipse retains the title at 10:03.

**Rating:** C. This was a nice first defense for Moon, especially when no one was buying a potential title change. The Eclipse is still one of the coolest finishers in wrestling and beating someone on the main roster is

a good way to make Moon look all the more dominant. There are some big names coming for her though and there's no way around that.

Post match Kairi Sane comes out and motions that she wants the title. Moon agrees but Shayna Baszler sneaks in and chokes Sane out.

Paul Ellering says the Authors of Pain's time isn't over yet and they're coming for the titles.

Moon says bring on all the challengers.

Video on how everyone qualified for the four way.

Next week is a two hour Year in Review show.

In two weeks, Sanity gets their rematch for the Tag Team Titles.

Killian Dain vs. Aleister Black vs. Johnny Gargano vs. Lars Sullivan

One fall to a finish and the fans are WAY behind Gargano here. Black goes after Sullivan to start and a hard shot sends him outside. After moonsaulting into his seated position, Black moonsaults out onto Sullivan....who catches him. Dain takes Sullivan down with a suicide dive and we take a break.

Back with Black kicking Sullivan up the ramp but getting shoved into the barricade. Dain throws Gargano onto Black before loading up the announcers' table. Gargano climbs the set to escape a powerbomb and kicks Sullivan onto the table instead. Dain DIVES off the stage to crush Sullivan through the table and Gargano is stunned.

Black and Gargano head back to the ring and the fans REALLY like this one. The slingshot spear is countered with a hard knee to the head. One heck of a superkick staggers Black into the Gargano Escape but Dain comes in for the save. A backsplash gets two on Black and a powerbomb into an elbow is good for the same on Gargano. Dain heads up but it's a double powerbomb to pull him out of the corner for another big crash. Somehow Sullivan staggers back to the ring to clean house, including a powerslam for two on Gargano.

It's time for another big man showdown and back to back clotheslines put both guys down. Black comes back in and cleans house with the kicks including Black Mass to Sullivan, only to have the Undisputed Era come out to break up the pin. A Last Shot on the floor drops Black until Gargano dives onto Adam Cole. Gargano sends the monsters into the steps and the slingshot DDT gives Johnny the pin on Black at 16:40.

**Rating:** B+. That's a great way to have Gargano win and to close out the year at the same time. Gargano was basically done a few weeks ago and now he's risen back up the card to become a top player. If you have him ready to win the title and then have Ciampa return to screw him over, the whole thing is pure gold. The battle of the monsters was very good here too and there were multiple ways to go for the winner here. Really fun match though and Black vs. the Era could be very entertaining.

**Overall Rating:** B. This was a good way to wrap up the year and it was a fun show as well. Taking next week off is fine too as there's only so much you can do with a lack of TV available. They've set some stuff up for the future, which is pretty much NXT's trademark at this point. Good show, very good main event and goals accomplished, which is really all you can ask for.

### Results

Street Profits b. Chris Star/Riley Apex – Frog splash to Apex

Ember Moon b. Sonya Deville – Eclipse

Johnny Gargano b. Lars Sullivan, Aleister Black and Killian Dain – Slingshot DDT to Black

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# NXT – December 13, 2017: Show Us Your Stuff

## NXT

Date: December 13, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Percy Watson, Mauro Ranallo, Nigel McGuinness

This is a special show as we're on the USA Network as part of WWE Week. It's the first time that the modern version of NXT has aired on TV and there's no way to guess how well this show is going to draw. That being said, it's a big time show with a qualifying match for the upcoming four way #1 contenders match. Let's get to it.

Note that there was a slightly different version of this show airing on the WWE Network. Things aired a bit out of order so if you're reading this after watching the normal version, there might be a few differences.

We open with a look at the NXT Title situation and the four way #1 contenders match being set up last week.

Opening sequence.

## Andrade Cien Almas vs. Fabian Aichner

Non-title. Aichner beat Almas a few months back before Almas won the title. Almas dropkicks him down to start but charges into a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker. The champ bails to the floor but gets caught with a HUGE springboard dive. Back in and a tornado DDT gets two on Almas, followed

by a hard powerbomb for the same. They head outside with Almas sending him into the steps as it's time to get fired up. Back in and the hammerlock DDT puts Aichner away at 2:15. Fun while it lasted.

Video on Aleister Black.

Video on Ember Moon, including her rise to the Women's Title.

#### Authors of Pain vs. Danny Burch/Oney Lorcan

Burch slugs away at Akum to start and everything breaks down in a hurry. Burch and Lorcan both hit running shots in the corner but Razar runs Lorcan over. A death valley drivers into the corner sets up the Super Collider and the Last Chapter ends Lorcan at 1:18. Another very energetic match while it lasted but rather short.

Next week: Tyler Bate vs. Pete Dunne for the UK Title and Undisputed Era vs. Sanity for the Tag Team Titles.

The following match didn't air on the USA version but did air on the Network.

#### Ember Moon vs. Peyton Royce

Non-title. Royce gets a rather nice reaction. Peyton wastes no time in kneeing her down, only to get caught in a headscissors. That's enough to send Peyton bailing to the floor so Moon dives onto both of them for a not great looking crash (she didn't get a ton of height). Back up and Royce's version of the Tarantula takes us to a break.

We come back with Moon armdragging her way to freedom and kicking Royce in the ribs. A double underhook is blocked and Royce fires off some kicks to the face for two of her own. The kickout draws some screeching and Mauro calls Peyton Royce the J Lo of WWE. Nigel: "IT'S PEY R0!" Royce's spinning kick is countered and a middle rope stomp to the ribs sets up the Eclipse for the pin at 7:36.

**Rating:** C. You can see Royce's dance background very clearly when she spins and it's a nice touch. As usual, the Iconic Duo are some of the best things in the division but they need to actually win something at

some point. Not a bad match at all, but Moon has bigger challengers coming after her.

Post match Billie Kay jumps Moon (Mauro: "Every kick begins with Kay!") and Royce adds a knee. Nikki Cross of all people makes the save. The Aussies bail and Nikki looks at the title.

The Street Profits talked to the fans, who seem to like them.

Sanity says they haven't left the battlefield and next week, they'll finish what they started.

Adam Cole is ready to win the NXT Title.

Shayna Baszler is coming.

#### Fatal Four Way Qualifying Match: Adam Cole vs. Aleister Black

Black gets him to the mat for a headscissors but Cole easily flips out for a pose. Back up and Black calmly drops him before firing off the rapid strikes. A knee to the head has Cole bailing up the ramp. We take a break and come back with Cole driving him down into a Crossface until Black gets over to the rope. Cole manages to pose but Black doesn't think much of the trash talk.

Back up and Black starts the strikes, including the running kick to the head. The springboard moonsault drops Cole again but it's too early for Black Mass. Instead Cole goes up but dives into a kick to the head for two. A jumping enziguri sets up Cole's Backstabber for two more and we hit that NXT chant. More kicks to the head rock Black and the fireman's carry backbreaker gets two more. Black blocks a low superkick though and knees Cole in the jaw. Cole: "WHAT DO YOU GOT???" Black Mass ends Cole at 11:15.

**Rating:** B. Black may do a lot of strikes but sweet goodness Black Mass looks great every time. There's something so sweet about kicking someone in the face and Black makes it look awesome. Cole losing clean is a bit surprising but I'd be stunned if Black isn't NXT Champion in the fairly near future.

**Overall Rating:** B-. This was a showcase episode and aside from the lack of a women's match (which may be due to the shortened run time thanks to the longer commercials), they hit every important point here. The champion was in action, they had an energetic tag match and a solid main event that advances the top story. Solid show here that flew by in a good way.

## Results

Andrade Cien Almas b. Fabian Aichner – Hammerlock DDT

Authors of Pain b. Danny Burch/Oney Lorcan – Last Chapter to Lorcan

Ember Moon b. Peyton Royce – Eclipse

Aleister Black b. Adam Cole – Black Mass

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# NXT – October 18, 2017: One Step Down the Road

## NXT

Date: October 18, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Nigel McGuinness, Percy Watson, Mauro Ranallo

It's the Undisputed night as the Undisputed Era are back in the ring this week. Tonight it's going to be the Undisputed Era vs. Sanity in a six man tag. The question though is how does this help us set up the upcoming Takeover: Houston and how the NXT Title will factor in. Let's get to it.

We open with a quick look at Sanity vs. Undisputed Era.

Opening sequence.

### Sonya DeVille vs. Ember Moon vs. Ruby Riot

The winner is in the four way title match at Takeover. Riot hurricanranas Ember to start but gets lariated down by DeVille. Sonya is sent outside and it's Ruby flipping Ember around into a standoff. The springboard crossbody gets two on Sonya and a kick to the face gets the same on Riot. Ruby it sent outside and Ember gets kicked down and we take a break. Back with Sonya suplexing them both down, only to be headscissored into Ember for two more.

Riot and DeVille slug away at each other until Sonya is knocked outside. It gets even worse for DeVille when she gets kicked out of the air by Ember. Moon is down as well though, only to have Ruby dive onto the two of them. She comes up with a horrible ankle though and things slow way down. Riot is still able to get inside, only to have DeVille slap on an ankle lock. The hold stays on for a good while until Moon comes in off the top with the Eclipse on Sonya and a pin on Riot at 11:34.

**Rating:** C-. I wasn't feeling this one for the most part as it felt disjointed for the most part. The injury at the end was fine and it seems

that Riot's ankle is fine. It's not terrible but they didn't have the best chemistry and it showed. Ember or Sane is the best option for the title at this point and it makes sense to have Moon make the title match. If nothing else it means another chance to see the Eclipse.

The Undisputed Era talked to Roderick Strong outside the Performance Center but we couldn't hear what was said.

William Regal is about to announce how the fourth participant in the Women's Title match will be chosen but the Iconic Duo comes up to interrupt. Regal gets around to saying that there will be a battle royal next week.

#### Aleister Black vs. Raul Mendoza

Before any contact, cue the Velveteen Dream on the apron with Black's vest. The distraction lets Mendoza knee Black to the floor, setting up a running flip dive to the floor. A springboard Swanton gets two on Black but the rapid fire kicks take Mendoza down. Black Mass puts Mendoza away at 2:10.

Dream leaves with the vest with Black glaring at him.

Drew McIntyre had a sitdown interview and is thrilled with his title reign so far. It's everything he had hoped it was and he's been feeling pretty good. A few years back he was released from his dream job and it took him a long time to get things together. He was always a wrestler and even his father never understood things. Somewhere along the line his fire went out and now he's back here to build something special.

Cue Zelina Vega to take over the interview to say Drew and Andrade Cien Almas have a lot in common. She was Andrade's second chance and thinks Drew has been avoiding him. Drew suggests going to William Regal because he'd love to give Almas a shot. If Andrade is serious, come see the champ himself.

#### Kassius Ohno vs. Cezar Bononi

They strike it off to start until Bononi hits a dropkick for two. Another dropkick puts Ohno on the floor, followed by a suplex for two back

inside. A third dropkick misses though and Ohno scores with his backplash. Ohno kicks him in the jaw and the rolling elbow is good enough for the pin at 3:05.

**Rating:** D+. Nothing to see here but Ohno is always going to get a reaction from his theme song alone. Bononi seems like someone who is ready to become a big star if he's given the right push or character. You can last a long time on a look like that and Bononi hasn't even scratched the surface yet.

### Sanity vs. Undisputed Era

Fish and Wolfe start things off with Fish striking away, only to get tossed into the corner. O'Reilly has about the same level of success and it's off to Dane to uppercut Kyle in the corner. The fast tags continue with Young adding a middle rope forearm to the chest for two. It's back to Fish, who scores with more kicks and right hands to Young as the beating takes us to a break.

Back with Cole grabbing a chinlock until his partners work on Eric's arms. O'Reilly gets two off a double suplex and some kicks keep Young down in the corner. Kyle is smart enough to kick Wolfe off the apron and bring Dain in, allowing him a chance to pull Young to the corner again. Not that it matters as Eric kicks O'Reilly away and makes the hot tag off to Dain.

That means it's time for the big man offense, including a hard running dropkick and some corner splashes. Fish and O'Reilly get tossed at the same time but Cole superkicks Dain in the back of the head for the save. A belly to back suplex/neckbreaker combination puts O'Reilly down and Cole is quickly surrounded. Sanity takes him inside...and here are the Authors of Pain to jump Sanity for the DQ at 13:31.

**Rating:** C+. I liked this one, though it didn't hit the level I was hoping it would. The ending is interesting as it could set up a potential three way feud, which often means a heck of a story. The Undisputed Era wasn't destroyed here as there was a reasonable chance that O'Reilly and Fish could have gotten back into it for the save. Good stuff here but it's a step on a long path.

The Authors destroy Sanity as the Undisputed Era leaves to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C+. The main event was the most interesting part of the show but more importantly we're starting to see the card for Takeover forming. That makes for some interesting shows as we're getting ready for the rest of the card. Just let us have a good special event and the TV feels even better than it already does. Solid show this week but nothing too great.

### Results

Ember Moon b. Sonya DeVille and Ruby Riot – Pin on Riot

Aleister Black b. Raul Mendoza – Black Mass

Kassius Ohno b. Cezar Bononi – Rolling elbow

Sanity b. Undisputed Era via DQ when the Authors of Pain interfered

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# NXT – September 20, 2017: Where Do We Go From Here?

## NXT

Date: September 20, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Percy Watson, Nigel McGuinness

This week should be centered around the fallout from last week with the Undisputed Era attacking the British contingent, which could set up a heck of a six man tag somewhere down the line. Other than that we need to find out where the NXT Champion Drew McIntyre ties into this as well. Let's get to it.

In Memory of Bobby Heenan.

Opening sequence.

### Johnny Gargano vs. Tino Sabbatelli

Gargano beat Tino's partner Riddick Moss last week. Tino drives him into the corner and messes with Johnny's head, earning himself a hard shot to the face. A dropkick takes Johnny down but the fans still think Tino sucks. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Johnny fights up and heads to the apron. The sunset flip is countered into a powerslam but Tino doesn't cover due to reasons of inexperience. The delay lets Gargano hit a superkick and grab the Gargano Escape for the tap at 3:48.

**Rating:** C-. Gargano getting a win here is the right call but it's an interesting idea to not have him mow through everyone as people tend to do around here. It was cool to see Gargano clear out some people, though I'm glad seeing Sabbatelli and Moss get some ring time. Tino looked better of the two and I'd like to see him make a few more appearances.

William Regal gives Roderick Strong a title shot in two weeks.

We look at Asuka vacating the Women's Title.

Sonya DeVille says she never fought Asuka because Asuka knew what would happen if they got in the ring. If anyone has a problem with that, they can put their hair up and square up. That's a really bad catchphrase.

### Bianca Belair vs. Lacey Evans

Belair wastes no time in taking Lacey down and slowly stomping away with a good cocky attitude as a bonus. Evans bails to the floor so Belair pulls on the arms for a bit. Back in and Evans takes her down and gets two off a legdrop as the fans aren't the most interested in this so far. Some clothesline and a slingshot Bronco Buster have Belair in trouble and the backflip into a splash (kind of a moonsault minus the jump) gets two. Belair whips her with the hair (still not liking that) and hits an Alley-Oop (powerbomb but she drops Evans backwards onto her face) for the pin at 4:18.

**Rating:** C. This was just a step above a squash for Bianca and that's far from surprising. She looked great in the tournament and I could see her going quite far around here, especially with the hair thing. Evans has a gimmick but I'm not sure she has enough to back it up in the ring, at least not that we've seen so far.

Here's Aleister Black (rocking the heck out of a suit) for his first promo in the NXT arena. Fifteen years ago, he started a journey that brought him here to NXT. He's seen a lot of things and he's put a lot of them on his skin to remember them by. His journey in NXT is just beginning...and here's Velveteen Dream to cut him off.

Dream says everything that fades to black will one day come to life. Even with all this light surrounding the Dream, he doesn't see anything in Black. In Black, he sees a man full of woe and skin covered in lies. Black must be afraid of the light but Dream knows that he has a heart, even if it's in the wrong place. Black kicks him in the face and sits down, only to have Dream drop to his knees right in front of him. Dream crawls backwards to quite the reaction.

We look at Lars Sullivan attacking No Way Jose more than once.

Dakota Kai is new around here but wants to be Women's Champion.

## No Way Jose vs. Lars Sullivan

Jose goes right after him to start but his crossbody has no effect. Some knees to the ribs have Jose out on the floor and Sullivan drives him ribs first into the apron. Back in and we hit the neck crank as this is a squash so far. Jose fights up and jumps on his back for a chinlock but one heck of a shoulder takes him down. Sullivan adds a top rope headbutt, followed by the standing Boss Man Slam to end Jose at 3:11.

**Rating:** D+. They might have something with Sullivan though it's a shame that it came at Jose's expense. I know he might not be the most popular guy in the world but the dancing gimmick is an anchor around him. Sullivan could be great as a wrecking ball and built up as someone to be slayed later on. Good performance here.

## Trent Seven/Tyler Bate vs. Kyle O'Reilly/Bobby Fish

Kyle and Bobby have Adam Cole in their corner. Bate and O'Reilly start things off as we hit the MOUSTACHE MOUNTAIN chant. Tyler spins out of a wristlock and hits a good looking dropkick into a nipup. It's off to Seven vs. Fish but Kyle won't let Trent try a big dive. The distraction lets Bobby run him over and it's time for the knee strikes. Seven's arms get cranked at the same time and a double kick to the chest gets two.

Trent finally gets in a kick of his own but Kyle breaks up a hot tag attempt. Like any good villain, Cole offers a distraction so Fish can drive Seven into the barricade. Back from a break with Seven still in trouble but being able to escape a fireman's carry. A hard clothesline is enough for the hot tag to Bate, who comes in with a springboard European uppercut.

Kyle charges into a t-bone suplex and a standing shooting star gets two. Everything breaks down and a belly to back suplex/powerbomb combo (cool) is good for two more on Kyle. The Tyler Driver 97 is countered into a guillotine choke though as Fish takes care of Seven. The unnamed Chasing the Dragon gets two on Bate thanks to a foot on the ropes. A second attempt doesn't work as well as Bate sends them into each other and makes the desperation tag. Seven grabs a half crab on Kyle but Cole takes out Bate. Something like Total Elimination ends Seven at 12:32.

**Rating:** B. This was the good match you probably expected it to be and that's all you can ask for. Assuming this story continues, it's all about the addition of Cole and Pete Dunne, which could turn into one of the most entertaining six man tags in a very long time. Of course that's assuming Cole isn't busy fighting McIntyre for the NXT Title.

Speaking of McIntyre, here he is to chase off the Undisputed Era. The trio stands in front of a curtain and that can't end well. Sanity walks through said curtain and the trio bails while Drew stands in the ring to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B. This was a great example of putting a bunch of stories into one show and capping it off with a big match at the end. They have a bunch of ways to go for Houston and that makes for a much more interesting show in a way. Cole could get the title shot but at the same time it's hard to imagine Black not getting into the title hunt very soon. Then again it's hard to imagine Drew being champion for very long as he seems to be a much better fit on the main roster than around here. Anyway, good effort this week and I'm interested in where this stuff is going.

### Results

Johnny Gargano b. Tino Sabbatelli – Gargano Escape

Bianca Belair b. Lacey Evans – Alley-Oop

Lars Sullivan b. No Way Jose – Standing Boss Man Slam

Kyle O'Reilly/Bobby Fish b. Trent Seven/Tyler Bate – High/Low to Seven

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## **KB's Review: Wrestling Prospectus**

Who might be the stars of the future? Here are eleven of them. Why eleven? Eh no reason.

<https://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-wrestling-prospectus/>

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## **NXT – August 2, 2017: Back To Black**

### **NXT**

Date: August 2, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Nigel McGuinness, Percy Watson

With just over two weeks to go to before Takeover: Brooklyn III, it's time to get some things moving. We already have a lot of the card set so now we can focus on building up what's already announced and set up some other stuff. Tonight the main focus seems to be on Aleister Black, who currently doesn't have a match for the big show. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

## Johnny Gargano vs. Raul Mendoza

Johnny comes out to the old DIY music and video but stops so they can both change to Gargano versions. Gargano takes him to the mat with a front facelock into a headlock but Mendoza nips up and gets two off a rollup. That earns Raul a superkick to the jaw and Johnny starts in on the arm. Mendoza gets in a dropkick for two of his own, only to miss a springboard and eat the spear through the ropes. Raul hits an enziguri and goes up but dives right into the modified Crossface for the tap at 4:13.

**Rating:** C. Gargano looked good here and that's all he had to do in his first match after the DIY split. Ciampa vs. Gargano is going to be a headline match when it finally happens but you have to keep Gargano hot while he's out there on his own. Not a bad match here, though Mendoza was nothing special.

We look at last week's brawl between Sanity and the Authors of Pain. The title match is official for Brooklyn.

Paul Ellering says the Authors will write the chapter at Brooklyn. Until then though, be prepared because the monsters are real.

Here's Asuka with something to say. As usual, she keeps it very simple by saying she's beaten Ember Moon before and Ember isn't ready to face her again. Cue Moon, to say she knows that she's ready, just as Asuka knows. Asuka offers the handshake but slaps Ember instead. The fight is on with Ember getting in some right hands but eating a kick to the face. Asuka poses with the title...and turns right into the Eclipse to knock her cold. Ember won't pick up the title, saying she'll touch it when she earns it. Good segment here with Asuka putting the Eclipse over huge.

Bobby Roode talks about proving that he's a better man than Roderick Strong but of course Roderick wants to play the lottery again. As for Drew McIntyre, Bobby is more than willing to have a chat with him in the ring next week. Roode goes to leave when Strong charges in for a fight. William Regal and security break it up with Strong saying he'll do anything to face Roode. Regal says his hands are tied because the match is made.

The Street Profits are here next week.

### Sonya Deville vs. Jenna Van Bimmel

Sonya offers to let the much bigger Jenna have some free shots but does some head faking to avoid them. A hard clothesline sets up some knees to the ribs have Jenna in trouble as this is looking squashish. Jenna hits a charge in the corner but gets pulled down into a triangle choke for the tap at 2:06.

Hideo Itami is tired of not being respected so he's not going to respect anyone. He rants in Japanese and ignores a need to go back to the arena. Instead he steals the mic and walks into the arena, saying he deserves respect. He doesn't care who's next but it's Aleister Black cutting him off. After the long entrance, Itami goes to leave but tries a sneak attack. That goes bad for him though Black Mass drops Itami with one shot. Black just sitting there staring at Itami's unconscious body is great stuff.

### Kyle O'Reilly vs. Aleister Black

This is Kyle's debut. Nigel: "HE'S HERE TOO!" Feeling out process to start and they fight over some grappling. Some striking doesn't last long and they go back to the grappling with Kyle not being able to get a triangle choke. A chinlock is countered into a hammerlock as Mauro is trying to get in every MMA reference he can.

Back up and a spinning leg sweep into the sitting pose has Kyle in trouble as we take a break. It's not much better for Kyle when we come back as Aleister kicks him square in the chest for two. Black charges into a boot to the jaw though and Kyle snaps off some kicks of his own.

Kyle grabs a leglock on the mat and it's a slap off until Black finally gets out. Black blocks a cross armbreaker so Kyle settles for a hammerlock and knees to the arm. Back from a second break with Black telling Kyle to hit him and grabbing a snap suplex for two. Kyle snaps the throat across the top though and it's right back to another arm hold.

Black kicks him in the head to escape and gets two off a Lionsault press.

A second attempt is blocked with a kick to the leg though and a big forearm to the back of the head gets two on Black. Aleister fires off more strikes but charges into a jumping knee. Not that it matters as Black Mass puts Kyle away at 22:56.

**Rating:** B+. I'm not big on the MMA style a lot of the time but this was very fun with both guys beating the heck out of each other for a long time. Black is one of the best built starts they've had in a good while as not only does he look cool but the finisher is as devastating as they've had in a long time. Kyle looked solid as well and it's a very good debut, though I have a feeling the ReDRagon reunion is the way to go for both he and Bobby Fish.

**Overall Rating:** A-. You can tell NXT is starting to feel it as we head into the biggest show of the year. We had the Tag Team Title match confirmed tonight and you can probably pencil in Black vs. Itami as well as Gargano vs. someone. Add that to the already announced NXT and Women's Title matches and Brooklyn is looking good. Give us a hard sell on the NXT Title match and everything will be fine.

### Results

Johnny Gargano b. Raul Mendoza – Crossface

Sonya Deville b. Jenna Van Bimmel – Triangle choke

Aleister Black b. Kyle O'Reilly – Black Mass

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# NXT – July 12, 2017: Brooklyn Is That Way

## NXT

Date: July 12, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Percy Watson, Nigel McGuinness

It's another big night tonight as we have the NXT Tag Team Titles on the line with the Authors of Pain defending against Heavy Machinery. In addition to that we have Johnny Gargano making his big return to the show after Tommaso Ciampa turned on him at Takeover: Chicago. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of DIY splitting up.

## Aleister Black vs. Bobby Fish

Now that's a nice surprise as Fish makes his NXT debut. They trade wristlocks to start (with Mauro calling Fish Roderick Strong by mistake) until a kick to the ribs puts Fish down. Fish scores with some strikes of his own but Black shows him how it's done, knocking Fish outside before having a seat in the ring. Bobby sweeps his leg from the floor though and we take a break.

Back with Fish winning another striking battle and hitting a dragon screw legwhip. A half crab is broken up but Fish is right back with a rear naked choke. Black escapes and finally has enough of this, scoring with a kick to the ribs and a springboard moonsault to a standing fish. A jumping knee to the jaw sets up Black Mass to put Fish away at 11:08.

**Rating:** B. That's quite the debut for Fish, who got in a lot of offense here and looked dangerous to someone on Black's level. Black continues to

look awesome as well with Black Mass becoming one of the best finishers around. It seems that he's moving up the ladder and I could see him near the NXT Title picture for Brooklyn.

We recap Kassius Ohno and Hideo Itami having even more issues last week.

Post match, Ohno said he was tired of Itami blaming everyone for his problems since Chicago. Ohno is done talking.

The Street Profits are coming.

The Velveteen Dream was annoyed at an attempted interview.

#### Mae Young Classic Qualifying Match: Vanessa Borne vs. Jayme Hachey

Borne has been on NXT before under the name Danielle Kamela. Hachey has performed around the indies under the name Jayme Jameson. Jayme takes her down and works on the arm but Borne comes up with forearms to the face. Something like a spinning belly to back suplex with a leg hook puts Jayme away at 1:48. That really wasn't a good finisher.

Last week, Sanity attacked Drew McIntyre in the parking lot. Wolfe said that Drew's time is running out.

Bobby Roode is in William Regal's office with the boss talking about the new #1 contender. Roode actually takes charge and suggests Dain vs. McIntyre for the #1 contendership. Regal goes with it and makes the match for next week.

Here's Gargano for his return speech. Gargano has been thinking about what Ciampa did to him over and over and he just can't get it. He's ready to move forward though because he can't control what happened but he can control how he reacts to them. Takeover: Brooklyn is coming up and Johnny has to be on that show, though he seems a bit hesitant.

#### Tag Team Titles: Authors of Pain vs. Heavy Machinery

The Authors are defending. Otis and Razar go nose to nose to start with Otis going nowhere off a forearm. A standing body block actually drops Razar and it's time for a standoff. Back from a break with Akam holding

Tucker in a cravate and sending him into the champs' corner. We hit the neck crank for a good while before it's back to Akam for a chinlock. Yeah it's slow but what were you expecting from these four?

Tucker finally gets in a hard clothesline for the break and the hot tag brings in Otis. Everything breaks down and a rather impressive overhead belly to belly sends Akam flying. Tucker's powerslam gets two on Razar but Akam breaks up the Compactor. The Last Chapter ends Otis to retain the titles at 11:16.

**Rating:** C. The match had a long stretch in the middle that wasn't great but the rest was the power slugout that it needed to be. I don't think anyone was really buying Heavy Machinery as a major threat to the titles and there's nothing wrong with having them lose here. I'm not sure who is going to take the titles at this point but that could make for something interesting going forward.

Post match Sanity comes out to stare down the Authors. Pages of the Book of Dominance fall and Wolfe eats one to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C+. I liked this show more than I was expecting to as they've started setting their sights on Takeover: Brooklyn and that's the biggest show of the year. There are stories going down that have my interest and the build should be a lot of fun. McIntyre getting into the title hunt is a good sign as he was ready for the main roster the day he debuted, meaning it would be a waste of time to not push him towards the title picture almost immediately. Throw in a heel vs. heel feud for the Tag Team Titles and we have some good stuff going on.

### Results

Aleister Black b. Bobby Fish – Black Mass

Vanessa Borne b. Jayme Hachey – Spinning belly to back suplex

Authors of Pain b. Heavy Machinery – Last Chapter to Dozovic

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# **NXT – June 21, 2017: That's Very Clubber Lang of Him**

## **NXT**

Date: June 27, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Nigel McGuinness, Percy Watson

It's the last episode of a taping cycle and that means we have a major match to wrap things up as Aleister Black is facing Kassius Ohno in what could be one of the hardest hitting matches we've ever seen in NXT. If nothing else Black needs to get a win over a bigger name instead of just beating nobodies time after time. Let's get to it.

Quick look at the main event.

Opening sequence.

Bobby Roode and Roderick Strong had a backstage altercation earlier today and we'll see it later.

Ember Moon vs. Peyton Royce

I rather enjoy Royce and Billie Kay's entrance but you can feel the pain coming from here. If nothing else I'm glad we get to hear Ember's awesome theme again. Ember sends her cowering into the corner to start and hits a running forearm to really take over. An early Eclipse attempt is broken up but Peyton can't hit a fisherman's superplex (that's a new one).

Instead she sends Ember shoulder first into the post and we take a break. Back with Peyton elbowing the bad shoulder like she should be doing. Ember fights up with the good arm but handsprings into a spinning kick to the face. A headscissors staggers Peyton but the threat of an Eclipse makes Billie pull her to the floor. Ember dives onto Kay to take her out and grabs a crucifix for two. Something like a Widow's Peak (without grabbing the chin) gives Royce two of her own but Ember sends her face first into the buckle. The Eclipse (still looks great) is enough to put Peyton away at 9:01.

**Rating:** C+. Despite Ember being out for several weeks, the Eclipse still feels like one of the deadliest finishers in NXT. They set up a perfect story with Asuka being worried about that one move and seeing it come back felt like a big moment. Instead of possibly finishing Asuka, that feels like the be all and end all for her reign if Ember can hit it. That's a great story and the roof is going to come off when she hits it on Asuka.

Hideo Itami comes up to Ohno to kind of apologize for his recent actions. Ohno understands and thinks they should be good to go, but Itami needs to stick on the good side.

### Ealy Brothers vs. Sanity

Eric Young and Alexander Wolfe this time. Gabriel and Wolfe start things off with the twin being taken down for an elbow drop from Young. Sanity stays on him with alternating beatings, including Wolfe letting Gabriel get close to his brother and then drag him right back. That's the kind of heel work I can always go for. A missed charge allows the hot tag off to Uriel, who cleans house for all of five seconds before getting caught in a belly to back suplex/middle rope neckbreaker combination for the pin at 3:21.

**Rating:** D+. Just a squash here and that's something Sanity could use at this point. They don't really have anything to do at this point so letting them squash a good looking team isn't the worst idea in the world. That's also a solid finisher which plays off of Young's wheelbarrow neckbreaker. Nice little piece of business here.

We look back at the end of last week's show with Asuka and Nikki Cross being left laying. Next week: Last Woman Standing.

Sonya Deville video.

#### Rachel Evers vs. Sonya Deville

Sonya wastes no time and clotheslines Rachel down for a knee to the back. Another knee to the ribs sets up some kicks in the corner, followed by a quick bodyscissors. The fans get behind Rachel and her right hands but Sonya takes off the glove and pounds away at the ribs. A Kimura makes Rachel tap at 2:42. Another total squash though couldn't the finish have been something on the ribs, which were worked on all match?

Earlier today, Roode was in a photo shoot when Strong and his family showed up. Roode said Strong's wife could be with a real man any time she liked and Strong snapped as you might expect. It's quickly broken up with Roode saying Roderick can have a title shot anytime.

That anytime would be in two weeks on the 400<sup>th</sup> episode.

#### Aleister Black vs. Kassius Ohno

Feeling out process to start with Ohno getting a quick takedown for almost no effect. Black sits him on the top rope for about the same impact and it's back to the technical work. Ohno gets two off a rollup but gets caught in a front facelock. A hammerlock keeps Kassius in trouble but a rope grab gives us a clean break.

The threat of Black Mass sends Ohno outside and it's the moonsault into the meditation pose. Ohno tries to kick him from there so Black nips up with a knee to the face. Kassius knocks him hard to the floor and we take a break. Back with Ohno chopping away in the corner and dropping a

backsplash for two. To really make this personal, Ohno sits down like Black, who doesn't take kindly to the disrespect.

Ohno pounds away again and asks if Black is good or evil. That's quite the perceptive question no? Somehow not crushed by the weight of that gut, Black pops up and slugs away, including a kick to the head for two. Another exchange of hard kicks gives Ohno two more as the BOTH THESE GUYS chant starts up. Since that worked so well, Black knees him in the head again for two more. A spinning bicycle kick (cool) gives Ohno two but a LOUD knee to Ohno's jaw staggers him again. Not that it matters as Ohno loads up the roaring elbow but walks into Black Mass for the pin at 16:47.

**Rating:** B+. Most matches have a distinct style to them and this one would be "hit each other in the face over and over again". I had a lot of fun watching this as they were beating the heck out of each other until one of them hit their big shot. It made both guys look especially tough, which is something we hadn't quite seen out of Black yet with all the short matches he's had so far.

**Overall Rating:** B. A return, two squashes, title matches announced for the next two weeks and one heck of a main event in the span of about 58 minutes. I'd certainly call that a success as it felt like an old version of NXT, which is one of the highest compliments I can give to a show. Really solid stuff here and hopefully they stick with this formula.

### Results

Ember Moon b. Peyton Royce – Eclipse

Sanity b. Ealy Brothers – Belly to back suplex/neckbreaker combination to Uriel

Sonya Deville b. Rachel Evers – Kimura

Aleister Black b. Kassius Ohno – Black Mass

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