

NXT – May 24, 2017: The Chicago Dream

NXT

Date: May 24, 2017

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Commentators: Percy Watson, Nigel McGuinness, Tom Phillips

This is one of those cool down shows that was taped before Takeover started off. In other words we're in for a night of quick matches with a bunch of interviews and recaps being used to fill in the gaps. Odds are we're not going to find out any storyline development tonight but slowing things down a bit isn't always a bad thing. Let's get to it.

As expected, we open with a long recap of Saturday's show. This makes the ending of the Women's Title match look a lot better.

Opening sequence.

Aleister Black vs. Curt Hawkins

This is actually fallout from an episode of Main Event where Black beat Hawkins without much effort. Black starts fast with his backflip into the seated position and grabs a rollup for two. A hard shot to the face staggers Hawkins and Black picks him up with a boot underneath the jaw. Hawkins bails to the floor but the chase goes badly as Black Mass ends Curt at 2:50.

Video on Saturday's ladder match with the Authors of Pain retaining and Tommaso Ciampa turning on Johnny Gargano to end the show.

Ember Moon talks about how her career got a boost here in Chicago but it sucks sitting here watching all the action.

Video on the Women's Title match, this time with narration.

Video on Roderick Strong vs. Eric Young.

Velveteen Dream vs. Robert Anthony

The Dream is the former Patrick Clark (with the music spelling out

C-L-A-R-K in the background) in something like an Exotic Adrian Street gimmick. A dropkick drops Anthony early on and we get some shouting in the corner. Dream goes up top for a spinning chop to the head as the LET'S GO JOBBER chants start up. A Rude Awakening sets up a very high top rope elbow to put Anthony away at 2:27. Dream looked good, albeit in a small dose.

Video on the UK Title match.

Dunne says bring on all comers because he'll do the same to them.

Video on Roode vs. Itami with Roode retaining his title.

Roode isn't surprise he retained and he'll decided who and when he fights again.

Roode will have a Glorious Celebration next week.

Wesley Blake vs. Drew McIntyre

This was set up backstage last week. McIntyre runs him over to start and tells Blake to bring it. Blake talks some trash and gets kicked in the face, followed by an overhead belly to belly to send Blake flying. Drew's throat is snapped across the top rope and we take a break. Back with Blake working on the arm with a Kimura and a cross armbreaker.

Drew fights right back with a clothesline and a sitout powerbomb for two. Blake sends him shoulder first into the post and grabs a quickly broken Crossface. Another comeback is countered with a Codebreaker onto the arm, only to have Drew toss him off the top. One heck of a headbutt sets up the running boot to the face to end Blake at 11:20.

Rating: C-. The announcers treat this like a big deal because Blake is a former NXT Tag Team Champion. Well yeah, and Drew is a former Intercontinental Champion. I really don't think it's all that impressive of a win. At least Drew is being featured now and I could easily see him challenging for the title in Brooklyn after Roode faces someone else (Roderick Strong being a likely option).

Overall Rating: D+. This was your usual post-Takeover show, meaning almost nothing happens and it's mainly a chance to catch your

breath. It's nothing you need to see but if you don't have time to watch the full thing, this is as good an option as you have. Oh and they managed to advertise something for next week because they're just that good at their jobs.

Results

Aleister Black b. Curt Hawkins – Black Mass

Velveteen Dream b. Robert Anthony – Top rope elbow

Drew McIntyre b. Wesley Blake – Running boot to the face

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Main Event – May 11, 2017: Black Out

Main Event

Date: May 11, 2017

Location: 02 Arena, London, England

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

It's the British version of the supplemental show, meaning we get to see the highlights from a pretty dull episode of Monday Night Raw. You can typically guess what you're going to get from something like this but there's always the chance, albeit somewhat unlikely, that they might throw in a curve ball. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Curt Hawkins vs. Aleister Black

Hawkins says the King of England called him on the telly and thanked him for making stars. That would be Black from NXT, which is quite the surprise. You'll normally see NXT stars at house shows but it's rare for them to be on TV like this. Black flips over him to start and the threat of a kick sends Hawkins outside. We hit the pose in the middle of the ring but Black nips up to avoid a charge, only to get punched down for a bit. Hawkins' chinlock doesn't get him very far as Black knees him in the face and uses his boot to raise Hawkins to his feet. Black Mass (spinning kick to the head) gives Black the pin at 2:02.

From Raw for the first time.

Kalisto vs. Braun Strowman

Braun says he's not wrestling this match and then kicks Kalisto in the face. Cue Roman Reigns though and we'll say it's a no contest at thirty seconds.

Three straight Superman Punches put Strowman on the floor but he still manages to kick a charging Reigns in the chest. Reigns gets the sling off the bad arm and sends it into the post over and over. A bunch of chair shots knock Strowman into the crowd.

And now, an actual match from Main Event.

Seth Rollins vs. Samoa Joe

They head straight to the floor to start the brawl with Joe throwing him around, only to have Seth catch him with a clothesline off the steps. The fight heads back inside with Joe taking over and grabbing a suplex for two. Joe gets in a hard shot to the knee though and Rollins crumbles to the floor as we take a break. Back with Joe dropping a big knee and telling Rollins not to listen to the fans.

The Koquina Clutch is broken up with a jawbreaker and Joe is sent outside for back to back suicide dives. A springboard clothesline

gives Seth two but he walks into the snap powerslam for two. Joe can't powerbomb him though and gets caught in the falcon's arrow. A turnbuckle pad is pulled off but Seth gets two off a superkick anyway. It's Rollins being sent chest first into the buckle behind the referee's back. Joe does it again in front of the referee's back for the DQ at 14:12.

Rating: C+. The ending hurts this a lot but these two definitely have chemistry. You can likely pencil in the third match for Extreme Rules and that could be quite the fight if they're given the right gimmick. I like that they didn't have the match end clean and after the first one ended on a fluke, there's a good chance that the third match is the real payoff.

Joe chokes him out after the match.

Gran Metalik vs. Noam Dar

They fight over the arm to start with an armdrag annoying Dar, mainly due to hair issues. The springboard armdrag sends Dar outside and a top rope Asai moonsault sends us to a break. Back with Dar kicking the leg out to send Metalik out to the floor. Dar grabs an armbar for all of a few seconds before Metalik's comeback doesn't get him very far. The Metalik Driver is countered by a kick to the ribs but Dar is dropkicked outside for a suicide dive. Not that it matters as the running kick to the chest ends Metalik at 10:15.

Rating: C-. I like both guys, especially Metalik, but this wasn't very interesting. These cruiserweight matches for the sake of having a cruiserweight match aren't great and this was no exception. You can only see these same people having the same matches so many times before it gets really old. Not bad, but old.

We'll wrap it up here.

Bray Wyatt vs. Dean Ambrose

Non-title with Miz and Maryse on commentary. Bray punches Dean in the head to start as Miz talks about wanting to return prestige to the Intercontinental Title. Dirty Deeds doesn't work so Bray suplexes him on the floor instead. Back with Bray getting two off a DDT until Dean hits a hard clothesline. Ambrose sends him outside for the running clothesline off the barricade and here are Miz and Maryse to ringside.

Sister Abigail is countered into a rollup for two and Dean hits the

top rope elbow. Miz grabs the Intercontinental Title for a distraction so Dean suicide dives onto him. Bray is smart enough to go after the distracted Dean, allowing Miz to hit Ambrose in the back with the title. Sister Abigail finishes Ambrose at 15:12.

Rating: D+. This was a long match to end a very long show. I can live with a dirty finish to set up a title match next week and Miz is someone you can buy as a threat to the title. I'm surprised Ambrose has held the thing as long as he has but it's time for him to lose it. Adding Bray to the mix could be interesting as well.

Miz poses over Ambrose and hits the catchphrase to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. Just a quick show here, which wasn't all that interesting as usual. Raw was really boring this week and this didn't make things any better. Black was a VERY big surprise though and that's one of the best things that can happen on a show like this. It would be really nice to have an NXT talent appear every now and then, if nothing else just to shake things up a bit.

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NXT – May 10, 2017: Four

Out of Five

NXT

Date: May 10, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Percy Watson, Tom Phillips, Nigel McGuinness

With ten days to go until Takeover: Chicago, it's time to crown a new #1 contender to the NXT Title. Tonight we have Hideo Itami facing Roderick Strong for the shot at Bobby Roode in Chicago. While this should seem like a foregone conclusion, Strong was built up quite well in the back to back video packages and looks good coming into the match. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks at Strong vs. Itami, which is all that needs to be focused on.

Opening sequence.

Aleister Black vs. Cesaro Bononi

The jobber is massive at probably 6'6 with a good look. A kick to the chest drops him with ease though and Black has a seat. More kicks set up a knee to the back and Black Mass puts Bononi away at 1:29. Great pop for the finish.

We look back at last week's battle royal with Asuka interfering and injuring Ember Moon. For the first time, Moon is officially ruled out, meaning it's going to be a triple threat.

Pete Dunne vs. Tyler Bate for the UK Title is also confirmed for Takeover.

Video on Dunne.

Video on Ruby Riot, including her growing up in Indiana. She has a lot of tattoos and they all tell a story. The end of the story: Ruby Riot on Women's Champion. No one has ever seen anyone like her and she's here to break the mold of the women's division. Does anyone NOT break that mold?

Earlier today we had a sitdown interview with Nikki Cross but she

couldn't sit still and refused to let a microphone be set up. She finally just grabbed the thing and said three, two, one action. Then she started messing with the boom mic while talking about Ruby. She wants to fight right now and wants her title too. This was rather disturbing in a good way.

Drew McIntyre is ready to take the NXT Title. Wesley Blake of all people comes in to say he deserves the shot. That seems to set up a match.

The Velveteen Dream is coming.

Here's DIY for a chat. They never had a fair rematch for the titles so it's high time they got their shot at the Authors of Pain. This brings out....Riddick Moss and Tino Sabbatelli? Really? They say the line starts behind them but DIY says Sabbatelli and Moss just crossed the line. The fight is on with DIY easily clearing the ring but here's a referee.

DIY vs. Riddick Moss/Tino Sabbatelli

Moss knees Ciampa down to start and it's off to Tino for a beating in the corner. The heels take turns stomping away until Sabbatelli grabs a chinlock. Ciampa throws him away though and the hot tag brings in Gargano to clean house. A kick to the head takes Moss down and the slingshot spear gets a rather delayed two (seemed like a slightly blown save). Gargano hits a dive to the floor and the Meet in the Middle ends Moss at 5:03.

Rating: C-. This was just a step above a squash with DIY looking like the polished team that they really are. Well done on bringing in Sabbatelli and Moss like this. They're way too young to win a match like this but they have to be brought to the main show again somehow and this was as good as anything else.

Post match Regal makes DIY vs. the Authors (who come out for the announcement) in a ladder match.

Kassius Ohno says he fell down against Bobby Roode and now he's in a bigger building. You take down a skyscraper brick by brick but here's Andrade Cien Almas to call Ohno a perro. NO! DON'T TRY TO BE

LIKE ALBERTO! Ohno reads him the riot act about squandering his opportunities and a match is made for next week.

Video on Tyler Bate.

Strong says this match is why he's here. His music starts playing so he has to leave.

Itami respects Strong but tonight, Roderick is going to go to sleep.

Roderick Strong vs. Hideo Itami

The winner gets the shot at Roode at Takeover. Feeling out process to start with Itami working on an early headlock. The threat of a big kick sends Strong outside and we take a break. Back with Itami forearming him in the head and grabbing a chinlock that doesn't go anywhere. Strong gets in a shot to the ribs though and the first backbreaker gets two.

Strong starts in on the shoulder and another backbreaker gets the same. It's off to a bodyscissors with Strong cranking on the shoulder even more until they fall outside. Strong doesn't waste any time by tossing Itami back first onto the apron. Back from a second break with a double clothesline putting both guys down. Itami gets his tornado DDT onto the top rope and a top rope boot gets two.

Strong is right back with an Angle Slam for two (SWEET! I can't stand that chant.) of his own but takes too long going up, allowing Itami to grab a super Falcon Arrow for a very near fall. The slugout actually goes to Strong but Itami gets all fired up and hits some running kicks in the corner to knock Strong senseless. The GTS sends Itami to Chicago at 22:59.

Rating: B+. I'm not sure what the point was in having Strong built up over the last two weeks to have him lose here but it was in a heck of a match. These guys beat the heck out of each other with Itami taking it to a level that Strong couldn't reach to finally put him away. Itami winning was the pretty obvious conclusion after the issues with Roode and the match should be really solid.

Itami helps Strong to his feet to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. This show set up a lot of Takeover and that's a

good thing with so little time beforehand. At the moment we have four matches announced with a fifth likely being set up next week (a four way between Strong, Black, Ohno and McIntyre for the #1 contendership would be a good option). They did a lot of advancing this week and that's where NXT shines, making this a good show.

Results

Aleister Black b. Cesaro Bononi – Black Mass

DIY b. Riddick Moss/Tino Sabbatelli – Meet in the Middle to Moss

Hideo Itami b. Roderick Strong – GTS

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NXT – April 12, 2017: Feel the Power of the New Guys

NXT

Date: April 12, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Nigel McGuinness, Tom Phillips, Percy Watson

We're finally back to normal as NXT returns home. We're also just over a month away from Takeover: Chicago, meaning things need to get

set up in a hurry. The big story tonight is the return of Drew McIntyre, who hasn't been in WWE for several years and has done a lot of growing up in that time. Let's get to it.

There's a new theme song and of course it's rap based because Heaven forbid we have a rock theme on any of these shows.

Aleister Black vs. Corey Hollis

Hollis is ready to go while Black stands with his arms behind his back...until Black Mass is good for the pin at 30 seconds.

We look at Tye Dillinger debuting on Smackdown.

Tye is thrilled at being on Smackdown but there's unfinished business around here. Earlier today he talked to William Regal and gets to face Eric Young in a steel cage next week.

DIY vs. Dylan Miley/Michael Blaze

Miley is a big guy with a great look for the late 80s. Ciampa can't take him down with a headlock as Miley just lifts him into the air. Gargano tries the slingshot but gets caught in a very delayed vertical suplex. It's off to Blaze who gets kicked in the head, followed by a running chop in the corner. A running knee knocks Miley off the apron and Meet in the Middle finishes Blaze at 2:59. Miley is going to get somewhere based off this performance as he's built like a tank and looks like a monster.

Miley destroys Blaze post match. Oh yeah he'll be pushed soon.

We look back at Asuka defeating Ember Moon at Takeover.

After the loss, Ember Moon walked through the empty arena, talking about how this was supposed to be her moment and destiny. Revenge is sworn.

Ruby Riot vs. Kimberley Frankele

That would be Kimber Lee of course. Kimberly takes her into the corner to start but gets armdragged down. Cue Nikki Cross for a distraction, allowing Kimberly to get in a backbreaker. Riot fights back with a series of knees and a Pele kick to the face for the pin at 2:21.

Video on the Authors of Pain.

Billie Kay and Peyton Royce are at the Performance Center and yell at Aliyah and Liv Morgan. A fight ensues with Kay being knocked into a water tub.

Oney Lorcan vs. Drew McIntyre

McIntyre's music has a bagpipe entrance. I'd assume that's going to be changed one day as it's really not working for him. Drew, who looks huge compared to Oney, drives him into the corner and throws him down with a belly to belly. Back in and Oney scores with some running uppercuts to send Drew outside for a running flip dive. A top rope dive is pulled out of the air and Drew slams him into the apron.

We take a break and come back with McIntyre throwing him off another suplex and scoring with a hard headbutt. Lorcan breaks up a superplex but gets caught in a choke throw. Back up and Lorcan just unloads with strikes to the head, only to get caught in a very hard reverse Alabama Slam. The Claymore (running jumping boot to the face, not named here) ends Oney at 8:50.

Rating: B. I'm scared to rate it any lower in case they hit me that hard. This was one of the hardest hitting matches I can remember in a very long time that didn't involve Shinsuke Nakamura. McIntyre looked like a brawler but that size difference was bordering on comical as he towered over Lorcan, though Oney was slugging right back. Really fun match here and a good way to show that Drew can slug it out with anyone.

Post match Drew says he has all the raw talent in the world and can put the Smackdown on anyone but he only wants to be right here.

Here's Shinsuke Nakamura for his big farewell. He came here a year ago and wanted to become the best in the world. One year later he calls NXT his home. Over that year, he's learned a lot of things from a lot of people, including the fans. He's learned that the people around here are crazy for things like singing his song. That strikes up the band as Nakamura calls NXT the fans' style. He will

always be NXT because we are NXT. Nakamura does his dancing poses as the locker room comes out to the stage to send him off. Even Finn Balor appears to close out the show.

Overall Rating: B-. This is another odd show as it was all about showcasing new talent instead of really moving things forward. That was a goal accomplished tonight as McIntyre got to look good, along with Ruby Riot, Black and Miley (especially him) doing the same. This show helped to start restocking the shelves, though there's a long way to go to really have that all set up.

Results

Aleister Black b. Corey Hollis – Black Mass

DIY b. Dylan Miley/Michael Blaze – Meet in the Middle to Blaze

Ruby Riot b. Kimberly Frankele – Pele kick to the face

Drew McIntyre b. Oney Lorcan – Claymore

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Takeover: Orlando Preview

Last year, NXT held its first Takeover event during Wrestlemania weekend with the instant classic "Takeover: Dallas". The show stole

the spotlight over Wrestlemania weekend and was pretty easily the best show of the four days, possibly even the year. Now it's time for round two and as luck would have it, NXT is in their own backyard, making this almost like a cross between a major house show and one of their biggest pay per views of the year. You don't hear something like that very often so let's get to it.

Sanity vs. Tye Dillinger/Roderick Strong/No Way Jose/Ruby Riot

We'll start with the most recently added match as Sanity makes a rare appearance at full strength against the combined forces of Tye Dillinger/No Way Jose/Roderick Strong/Ruby Riot. This has been simmering for months now and as usual, it's a pretty simple idea. Sanity has gone after Dillinger and it was time to even the numbers up a bit as Dillinger was tired of all the beatings. His team came together over the next few weeks and now we have a full on match between the eight of them.

Very simply put, if Dillinger doesn't get the fall here (it doesn't matter who it's over but Young would be preferable), I have no idea what they're thinking. The fans are dying to explode for Dillinger and what better place is there than this Takeover? Sanity isn't the most interesting team in the world aside from having a really cool look. While they need the win, I think they can bounce back better. Dillinger has lost so many times already that I'm not sure how many more times he can bounce back from losing on the big stage. I really hope they don't screw this up as they're running out of time to capitalize on Dillinger's popularity.

Aleister Black vs. Andrade Cien Almas

We'll move on to a pretty big debut with Black making his first in-ring appearance in NXT. He already had a match at the WWE United Kingdom Championship tournament under his Tommy End moniker but this week is the first time we'll see his new gimmick. Almas has been on a roll lately with the heel character really starting to hit its stride. His match with Oney Lorcan last week was a major highlight and helped set him up for this match against Black.

That being said, this is another match where the winner should be

obvious. NXT isn't going to put Black out there in his debut and have him lose so Almas has next to no chance. That being said, you could have made the same case last year about Sami Zayn vs. Shinsuke Nakamura and that turned out fine. I'm hoping that Black can go in the ring well enough to match his great vignettes though that's what got Almas in trouble for his debut. But yeah, Black wins here and does so handily.

Women's Title: Asuka vs. Ember Moon

Asuka won the Women's Title about a year ago in Dallas and hasn't looked back since. She's completely steamrolled over everyone she's faced and it's almost impossible to imagine her losing a match. That's where the story has worked so well. It's pretty much been acknowledged that Ember Moon can't hang with Asuka all the way through a match but what she can do is hit the Eclipse, which has been built up as the most dangerous weapon the division has ever seen. It's almost reminiscent of Steve Austin vs. Shawn Michaels as all Austin had to do was catch Michaels once and it would be over. The question is can Moon get that far.

As logical as it would be to have Asuka lose here and go on to the main roster soon after, I'm really not sure that happens anymore. NXT has done a nearly flawless job of making Asuka feel unbeatable and that's still the feeling I have here. Moon should be the favorite and the place will go nuts if the Eclipse gives her the title, but I'm actually going with Asuka in my regular prediction almost guaranteed to be wrong. Moon is the best candidate to dethrone Asuka but I actually don't think she does.

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

I'm very rarely a fan of triple threats but this is a case where the story has been built precisely in this direction, which makes it more than acceptable. Revival and DIY had some incredible matches against each other last year but now they've run into a wall with the champions, who run over everything in their path. Having the other teams band together to fight the Authors is interesting and could make for a very good story to the elimination tag, especially

if one of the other teams gets to conquer them in the end.

I'll go with the Authors retaining here as DIY could easily be brought up to the Cruiserweight division while the Revival seem like perfect additions to the main roster tag divisions. The Authors are perfect choices to keep the titles until a new team is put together to slay them. I don't know who could fight DIY save for maybe Sanity, which doesn't seem like the most interesting thing in the world. We'll go with the titles being retained, which would make the most long terms sense.

NXT Title: Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Bobby Roode

We'll wrap it up with a rematch as Nakamura, this time on two good knees, tries to get the NXT Title back from Roode, who took it from him in a great match back at "Takeover: San Antonio." This time around Nakamura knows not to underestimate him, which could make for an interesting change of pace. Roode has looked great since winning the title while Nakamura has spent most of the time rehabbing his injured knee.

I think I'll go with the champions making a clean sweep as, much like the Revival, there's no need to put the title back on Nakamura. He's held it twice already and is more than ready to move up to the main stage. Just let Roode move on and feud with someone new (Dillinger for example) before losing the title at "Takeover: Brooklyn III". The match will be fun, though I'm curious as to how they could have Nakamura lose to Roode again without some sort of shenanigans, which you don't get too often in NXT.

Overall, the show looks good but not great. As is almost always the case, it's going to come down to the performances, which have a tendency to be outstanding. Let the wrestlers do their thing in a logical manner and everything will be fine. The crowd is going to carry a lot of this and that's what arguably matters most at any given NXT show. Last year set a very high bar but I believe NXT can actually pull something like this off again.

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