

# NXT – March 14, 2018: I’m Pi- Ning for Takeover



IMG Credit: WWE

## NXT

Date: March 14, 2018

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Percy Watson, Nigel McGuinness

It’s another big night as we have four weeks left before Takeover: New Orleans. That means knocking out more matches in the Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic, but on top of that we have some build towards a title match. This week NXT Champion Andrade Cien Almas and Aleister Black will sign the contract for Takeover: New Orleans which could be interesting. Let’s get to it.

[Here’s last week’s show if you need a recap.](#)

Opening sequence.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic First Round: Sanity vs. Riddick Moss/Tino Sabbatelli

Sabbatelli and Moss seem to be having some issues coming into the match. Moss knees Wolfe in the ribs to start and hits a release Hot Shot to really take over. It’s off to Sabbatelli and the fans aren’t exactly thrilled to see him. A good looking dropkick (Mauro: “That dropkick

certainly didn't suck!") keeps Wolfe in trouble and Tito begrudgingly brings Moss back in.

Some stomps in the corner look to set up a running forearm but Moss hits Sabbatelli by mistake (telegraphed by a mile and still exactly the right move) and it's off to Young. House is quickly cleaned and Young gets two off the top rope elbow. Moss pulls Young to the floor but Nikki Cross dives off the apron with a crossbody. The belly to back suplex into a neckbreaker is enough to pin Sabbatelli at 3:45.

**Rating:** C-. I'm not sure what Moss and Sabbatelli are supposed to do if they split up. They're not the best team in the world in the first place and having them go their separate ways might be it for both of them. Sanity winning makes the most sense as they're not going to win but the team that beats them will get a nice rub.

Here's Tommaso Ciampa with another microphone but again, the Johnny Gargano signs and chants leave him unable to speak. The fans send him off with the Goodbye Song.

#### Dakota Kai vs. Lacey Evans

Dakota has a taped up shoulder. Evans goes right for the arm by taking her down and dropping a knee, followed by an armbar. Not that it matters as Kai rolls her up for a very fast pin at 55 seconds.

Post match here's Shayna Baszler to go after Kai but Ember Moon makes the save. The fight is on and Kai breaks up an armbar, allowing Moon to hit the Eclipse. They needed to do something like this as Moon hasn't gotten to do much of anything since the title match.

#### Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic First Round: Heavy Machinery vs. Street Profits

Dozovic and Ford start things off with Ford getting run down by a shoulder. With the wrestling not working, Ford tries to offer him the cup. Otis seems to like it but clotheslines Ford's head off instead. A double slam gets two on Ford and it's off to Knight for a bearhug. Ford finally gets over for the hot tag to Dawkins. The big man starts firing

away but Otis hits a heavy Thesz press. The Compactor is broken up though and Dawkins gets in a DDT. Ford adds the frog splash for the pin at 3:38.

**Rating:** C. This was almost a squash until the hot tag to Dawkins. The Profits are a better act than Heavy Machinery, who lost most of their steam as soon as they lost their first match. I'm digging the Profits more and more each time and it's a good idea to let them get a win in the tournament. Not much of a match here but at least the right team won.

United Kingdom Title: Pete Dunne vs. Adam Cole

Cole is challenging and we get the big match intros. Dunne has to go after the Undisputed Era before coming back in for a forearm to Cole. That means it's time to crank on the fingers and the jumping stomp to the arm. Dunne takes him to the apron and stomps down on the arm again as this is completely one sided. An Undisputed Era distraction lets Cole tie him up on the ropes though and Dunne comes up holding his knee.

Back from a break with Dunne hitting an X Plex and winning a slugout as the knee seems fine. There's an enziguri in the corner and a Batista Bomb gets two. The Bitter End is reversed into a Backstabber and they're both down again. It's off to the standing armbar but Cole comes right back with the Last Shot (a fireman's carry backbreaker here rather than the brainbuster) for two.

Another slugout goes to Dunne, with one forearm knocking Cole from the middle of the ring into the corner. Dunne tries a moonsault out of the corner but Cole superkicks him out of the air (with Dunne upside down) for a very near fall. Dunne goes after the Era again and the distraction lets Cole hit the Last Shot (now the brainbuster version). That's still not enough though as Dunne snaps the fingers and loads up the Bitter End, drawing in O'Reilly for the DQ at 11:57.

**Rating:** B. Dunne continues to be a treat to watch and he's pretty much been turned face just through his great performances. This was another example of those skills, but at some point Cole needs to win something. I know he has a great presence and can talk quite well but he hasn't won a big match in a long time now and it's getting noticeable.

Post match the Era beats Dunne down until Roderick Strong makes the save. Strong gets taken down as well but Dunne gets up and helps chase them off.

General Manager William Regal is here for the contract signing between Andrade Cien Almas and Aleister Black. Aleister comes out but there's no Almas with Zelina Vega taking his place. Vega moves the table and we have a staredown but Almas has a seat in front of her. Black: "Well at least now we're on the same level." Vega promises to make him reap what he sows and gives him a slap. Black signs the contract and says he didn't come alone. Cue Candice LeRae to go after Vega. Candice knocks her onto the announcers' table and lays Vega out with a bulldog to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B. A good match and they moved towards New Orleans. You can put together most of the pieces from here (save for the tournament maybe) and that's a good thing given how few weeks they have left. Vega vs. LeRae needs to take place at some point and if they let them go nuts, it could be a lot of fun. I don't know about having it at Takeover but it needs to take place at some point. Solid show here with good wrestling and angle advancement, which is a nice combination.

### Results

Sanity b. Tino Sabbatelli/Riddick Moss – Belly to back suplex/neckbreaker combination to Sabbatelli

Dakota Kai b. Lacey Evans – Rollup

Street Profits b. Heavy Machinery – Frog splash to Dozovic

Pete Dunne b. Adam Cole via DQ when Kyle O'Reilly interfered

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# NXT – March 7, 2018: Ain't That A Kick In The Head



IMG Credit: WWE

## NXT

Date: March 7, 2018

Location: Center Stage Theater, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Nigel McGuinness, Mauro Ranallo, Percy Watson

It's tournament time! Just in case two tournaments going on at the same time wasn't enough, tonight we start the third Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic. This time, the winners will be challenging for the NXT Tag Team Titles at Takeover: New Orleans. Other than that we need to start building to the rest of that show so let's get to it.

[Here's last week's review if you need a recap.](#)

We open with a look at the tournament, accompanied by Dusty Rhodes' iconic theme song.

Opening sequence.

### Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic First Round: Authors of Pain vs. TM61

Rematch of the 2016 finals where the Authors won the whole thing. Razar and Thorn start things off with the former throwing Shane into the corner and driving some shoulders into the ribs. The fans are behind TM61 and a flapjack doesn't really slow down the cheering. Thorn gets driven into the corner and brings Miller in for a double Russian legsweep. The Authors bail to the floor for a bit so Thorn is right there with the big flip dive over the ropes. Now that's a Dusty move if I've ever seen one.

Back in and Akum shrugs off the right hands to the face and drives Miller HARD into the corner. We take a break and come back with Razar continuing to pummel Miller with hard shots to the head. A cobra clutch keeps Miller down until a DDT gets him out of trouble. The hot tag brings in Thorn for a clothesline and dropkick to finally drop Razar.

One heck of a Falcon Arrow gets two but Razar kicks Thorn's head off to take him down. A powerbomb/neckbreaker combination gets two but Miller and Thorn slip out of stereo Death Valley Drivers. Miller gets two off Blue Vengeance (moonsault) with Akum making the save. Akum powerbombs Thorn over the top and ONTO THE APRON for a sick landing. The Last Chapter ends Miller at 11:02.

**Rating:** B. These guys beat the heck out of each other and while I'm kind of surprised that TM61 is out so soon, I'm also glad that the Authors are moving forward. I don't think they win again but the team that beats them is going to look like giant killers. This was a very nice power vs. speed match and they beat the heck out of each other, especially with that powerbomb.

William Regal is talking to the press about the Dusty Classic but has to leave. Pete Dunne comes in and says the UK Title is staying in the UK. Roderick Strong pops in to ask for a rematch. Before Dunne answers, the Undisputed Era comes in to laugh at Strong for losing. Dunne brings up

Cole never winning anything, drawing Regal back over to ask if there's a problem. Apparently not.

Sanity says chaos rules everything and in this year's tournament, united they purge. Tonight, Killian Dain is ready to unleash chaos on Aleister Black.

#### Bianca Belair vs. Miss Drew Renee

Belair wastes no time in rolling some vertical suplexes and the Alley Oop is good for the pin at 1:21.

Lacey Evans wants to face Ember Moon next week but bails when Shayna Baszler comes in. Baszler knows Moon is a hypocrite for ignoring her for another week.

Heavy Machinery talks about being the good beef this year.

Here's Tommaso Ciampa with no music to be booed out of the arena. Much like Roman Reigns the night after last year's Wrestlemania, Ciampa is cut off every time he brings the microphone to his mouth. The WE WANT JOHNNY chants set Ciampa off and he throws the microphone down.

Ciampa slowly walks around the ring as the fans sing the Goodbye Song and then the DELETE chant. He takes a Gargano sign from a fan and rips it up (make sure to give the fan a gift so he doesn't go home sad) before beating on the pieces with his crutch. Ciampa leaves without saying a word. Really good segment here, especially considering Ciampa looks like an actual psycho half the time.

Next week: Cole vs. Dunne for the UK Title and two more first round matches.

#### Aleister Black vs. Killian Dain

Dain charges straight into the corner for a shotgun dropkick and a near fall. Black is right back up with kicks and knees to send Dain outside, followed by a big dive to take him out again. We take a break and come back with Dain running Black over and getting a delayed two. Dain grabs a seated abdominal stretch and adds a pair of splashes for two.

A slam doesn't work though as Black slips out and fires off the kicks to drop Dain. Black gets two off a standing Lionsault but gets clotheslined out of the air for two more. With Dain getting a bit too strong, Black goes simple by just kicking him in the head. That only earns Black a spinebuster and Vader Bomb for another near fall. Black gets two off a victory roll and catches Dain right in the face with Black Mass for the pin at 11:52.

**Rating:** B-. It wasn't the biggest surprise ending in the world but at least Black took a beating before coming back with Black Mass for the win. If he hits that on Almas to win the title, or even for a near fall before winning the title later, it's going to blow the roof off of New Orleans. Good match here though and Black gets one step closer to the title.

**Overall Rating:** B+. You can see things moving towards New Orleans now and that means a lot of good things, at least in theory. There's going to be a lot of good stuff taking place on that show and it makes for a lot of fun television on the way to the big show. Two good matches and a nice squash makes for a very solid 45 minutes of wrestling.

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# NXT – February 28, 2018: Gone But Not Out Of His Contract



IMG Credit: WWE

## NXT

Date: February 28, 2018

Location: Center Stage Theater, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Percy Watson, Nigel McGuinness, Mauro Ranallo

We're still closing in on Takeover: New Orleans but this time we'll be doing it without Johnny Gargano. Last week Gargano put his NXT career on the line for another shot at the NXT Title but former partner Tommaso Ciampa cost him the title with a crutch shot to the back. Now we need to figure out what's going on in New Orleans so let's get to it.

## [Here's Last Week's Show](#)

We open with a recap of last week's title match with Gargano and wife Candice LeRae stared back at the ring in sadness as Ciampa looked at them in contempt.

Opening sequence.

[Velveteen Dream vs. Tyler Bate](#)

This should be good. Dream crawls away in reverse and the fans are split, albeit more for Dream than Bate. Tyler puts on a short form clinic by sliding between Dream's legs, jumping over him, and wristlocking Dream into a rollup for two. A dropkick has Dream livid on the floor as we take a break.

Back with Bate slipping out of a suplex but running into an elbow to the jaw. Dream gyrates a bit and grabs a reverse chinlock, followed by a reverse chinlock for good measure. Bate fights up and hits a running elbow in the corner for two as the pace picks up a bit. The airplane spin has Dream in trouble but he's still able to elbow his way out of the reverse version.

The Tyler Driver 97 is countered with a backdrop and one heck of a spinning spinebuster gives Dream two. They slug it out from their knees with Bate getting the better of it but Dream sends him hard into the buckle. Dream goes to the top but gets crotched. Bate is shoved down anyway and the Purple Rainmaker is good for the pin at 12:08.

**Rating:** B-. Bate is settling into the role of the bulletproof wrestler, which is about as bad of a spot as you can get. I can't remember the last time that he won a match and now he's stuck losing over and over again. That being said, he's still one of the most consistently strong performers around and it's almost always a good performance. Dream is on another level than almost anyone else right now though and I'd be surprised if he isn't NXT Champion by the end of the year.

Paul Ellering and the Authors of Pain want the Tag Team Titles back.

We see William Regal giving Gargano his termination papers, but Gargano will still be required to make media appearances and live events that he was already signed for. That sounds important. The referee admitted that he made a mistake and is sorry that he cost Gargano his career. Gargano seems to accept it.

### Cezar Bononi vs. Adam Cole

Actually hang on a second as Cole grabs a mic and offers Bononi a spot on the team. O'Reilly throws him a shirt but it's a ruse so Cole can stomp

him down in the corner. Bononi is right back with a Michinoku Driver for two but another distraction lets Cole hit a superkick. A running knee to the back of the head ends Bononi at 2:55. Just a win to keep Cole hot until he gets a match at Takeover.

We recap Kairi Sane winning the Mae Young Classic by defeating Shayna Baszler, who has gone full villain since. Baszler has destroyed various people, typically by wrecking their arms. It seems that Baszler is on her way to the Women's Title but Sane is trying to slow her down.

The Street Profits interview people about the upcoming Dusty Classic. The first round starts next week.

### Kairi Sane vs. Shayna Baszler

Sane hammers away to start but Shayna takes her down by the leg. Kairi is sent to the apron and Baszler starts in on the ribs to slow Sane down. A knee to the ribs takes us to a break with Sane in trouble. Back with Baszler getting two off a gutwrench suplex before starting on the arm.

The armbars is reversed into a rollup for two and Sane chops away in the corner. Sane gets a breather off a spear and the sliding knee in the corner has Baszler in trouble. A top rope forearm gives Sane two and a spinning backfist puts Baszler down again. It's too early for the Insane Elbow though as Baszler kicks her in the head, setting up the Kirifuda Clutch to make Sane tap at 7:22.

**Rating:** C+. This was exactly how the match should have gone: Baszler gets the win back and looks dominant in the process, showing that she is now better than Sane and can beat her in rather short order. The match should set Baszler up for the Women's Title match in New Orleans, where she needs to win the title in similarly dominant fashion.

Post match Baszler calls out Ember Moon, promising to leave with either the title or her limb.

Here are Andrade Cien Almas and Zelina Vega for a chat. Vega calls Almas Mr. 4-0 (over Gargano) and laughs about Gargano having his wife there for the last loss. Gargano was bragging about earning respect but Almas earns

MONEY. Almas talks about making Johnny Wrestling Johnny Jobless but Almas is still called the NXT Champion. They go to leave but Aleister Black cuts them off. Before Black can say anything though, here's Killian Dain for the brawl, including a running crossbody to take Black down and end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B. Well there's the next title match and they went out of their way to suggest that Gargano isn't quite gone yet. I'm starting to get excited for Takeover and that's a good sign with nearly six weeks left. The show could be a heck of a card and it's nice to have good TV setting us up on the way there. Throw in what should be the start of a good tournament next week and things are rolling.

### Results

Velveteen Dream b. Tyler Bate – Purple Rainmaker

Adam Cole b. Cezar Bononi – Running knee to the back of the head

Shayna Baszler b. Kairi Sane – Kirifuda Clutch

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# NXT – February 14, 2018: Roses Are Red, Violets Aren't Blue, OW MY ARM!

## NXT

Date: February 14, 2018

Location: Center Stage Theater, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Nigel McGuinness, Percy Watson, Mauro Ranallo

We've got another packed show this week with two title matches on tap. First up the Women's Title is on the line as Ember Moon defends against Shayna Baszler in a rematch from Takeover: Philadelphia. After that, Pete Dunne defends the United Kingdom Title against Roderick Strong. Let's get to it.

We open with a quick preview of both title matches.

Opening sequence.

### United Kingdom Title: Roderick Strong vs. Pete Dunne

Dunne is defending. Strong goes for a very early attempt at the Strong Hold but Dunne slips out as we take an early break. Back with Dunne twisting Strong's arm around in a very strange angle and kicking it hard. They head outside with more shots to the arm as Dunne is certainly focused so far.

Strong sends him into the barricade though and gets it back inside to take it to the mat. The first backbreaker gets two and the second sends Dunne into the corner for a stomping. They head up top where Dunne cranks on the arm again to get out of a superplex. That's fine with Strong who gets a fireman's carry to drop Dunne onto the barricade.

We take another break and come back with Dunne grabbing the arm again. This time he cranks it back ala Lucha Underground's Pentagon Dark, followed by a sitout powerbomb for two. A snap German suplex puts Strong down again but he dives into a dropkick to give Roderick two this -time.

Another backbreaker is countered into an exchange of rollups for two and both guys are down again.

Dunne scores with an enziguri for two and grabs a triangle choke, only to have Strong pull him throat first into the rope for the break. Strong takes him up top for a super Angle Slam and it's time for another Strong Hold. That's broken up with a snap of Strong's fingers though and the Bitter End retains the title at 21:12.

**Rating:** A-. Is Dunne capable of having a bad match? I really don't remember the last time that he's done anything less than great and a lot of that has to do with bringing in a completely different style mostly independent of the WWE training system. Strong looked great here, but at some point he has to actually win something. The great performances can carry him a long way, but he has to actually pull off a big win.

We look back at last week's outstanding segment with Johnny Gargano, Candice LeRae, Andrade Cien Almas and Zelina Vega. The title rematch is next week.

Velveteen Dream is ready for No Way Jose next week. He has no comment on wanting to face Tyler Bate.

Here's Aleister Black in a suit for a chat. Black's path has always lead him one way, starting with a sensation, left him in a dream and put him in the way of an era. The devil has been driving him and that devil is the NXT Championship. Cue Killian Dain to say the devil isn't on Black's back. Dain is the one on Black's back and wants the NXT Title as well. That means Dain has crossed Black though, and now he must fade to black. Aleister challenging for the title in New Orleans makes sense and this certainly feels like the first step toward that match.

#### TM61 vs. Andrew Duckworth/John Skyler

Thorn drives Skyler into the corner to start and takes Duckworth down with a suplex. A few shots to Thorn's knee get him into the corner though and trouble begins. It's over in very short order though as Thorn grabs a belly to back suplex. The hot tag brings in Miller to start cleaning house in short order. Thunder Valley ends Skyler at 2:12. Basically a

squash.

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

Moon is defending and wastes no time hammering Baszler up against the ropes. The step up enziguri and a pump kick to a kneeling Baszler have her in big trouble. It's too early for the Eclipse though as Baszler rolls to the floor, only to be taken down by a HARD suicide dive. Moon wrecks the bad arm though and the title is in big trouble. Back in and Baszler grabs a cross armbreaker but Moon is quickly in the ropes. They head outside again with Moon's arm getting caught in the barricade for more damage. Baszler is going off on the arm so here's Kairi Sane for the save and the DQ at 4:46.

**Rating:** D+. Just angle advancement here with Baszler continuing to the monster who doesn't play by the rules. She'll win the title, likely in New Orleans, and whoever gets to beat her can be the giant killer. It's a classic story (or one ripped off from Samoa Joe and AJ Styles in TNA) and it'll work very well here.

Sane clears the ring and checks on Moon to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B. They've got some big stuff set up for the coming weeks and you can tell they're already looking towards New Orleans, which is less than two months away. Next week intrigues me though as you could go either way with Gargano winning and facing Black, who he's already pinned, in New Orleans or have Ciampa interfere and cost Gargano his NXT career. I'm sure they could find a way to get to the obvious grudge match though, and it's cool to have so many of these options available.

### Results

Pete Dunne b. Roderick Strong – Bitter End

TM61 b. Andrew Duckworth/John Skyler – Thunder Valley to Skyler

Shayna Baszler b. Ember Moon via DQ when Kairi Sane interfered

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# NXT Takeover – Philadelphia: Holy Bleep Indeed

## **Takeover: Philadelphia**

Date: January 28, 2018

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Percy Watson, Mauro Ranallo

This one is a little bit different as we don't really have a top match to build this show around. There's a lot of good stuff but nothing all that great. That being said, it's kind of NXT's bread and butter as they know how to set up a full card instead of hanging everything onto one match. Let's get to it.

Paul Heyman narrates the opening video, which is either brilliant or missing the point. He talks about how this city has a rich history of fighting but tonight is about the future. We see the standard clips of the big matches before Heyman caps it off with the WE ARE NXT line. Heyman is synonymous with Philadelphia but has never done anything of note in NXT, but the delivery more than makes up for it.

Nigel McGuinness is sick today so Percy gets to take up the slack. This could be a long night.

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

The Era is defending but there's no Adam Cole due to his match later. The Authors jump the champs to start things off, sending Fish and O'Reilly outside before the opening bell. Fish bails from Razar to start so it's Kyle coming in to take him down and strike away. That goes as long as you would expect with Razar powering out without much effort, meaning it's time to get another breather.

Back in and Fish goes after the knee but gets knocked around by the raw power. It's off to Akum for some shots to the head, which send the champs outside. Walking away doesn't work as Fish is pulled back and dropped face first onto the barricade. Back in and Akum gets low bridged to the floor, allowing Fish to kick him in the leg and really take over. Fish spears Razar to the floor (I didn't think he could pull that off) and it's time for the double kicks to the ribs.

Some hard kicks to the leg take Akum down and O'Reilly comes back in for a leg lock. Some champion miscommunication allows Akum to hit a good back body drop for the hot tag off to Razar, even though there really aren't any faces in this. The fall away slam/drop backwards with Fish on Razar's back combination crushes the champs all over again but they're right back up with the strikes in the corner.

Fish again shows off the power with an exploder suplex for two but Razar slugs them down. Akum comes back in on the bad leg but it's a jumping knee to the head to cut off the Last Chapter. O'Reilly grabs a kneebar on Akum and Fish gets a choke on Razar, who flips him down onto Kyle for the save. Not bad.

Everyone is down so the fans start the dueling chants. It's Akum up first and buckle bombing Fish. A buckle bomb crushes O'Reilly and the Super Collider connects but Akum can't powerbomb Fish. Instead it's a hurricanrana to send the Authors into each other and Fish rolls Akum up to retain at 14:56.

**Rating:** B. While not a great match, it was a smart match with the champs coming at them with a power game to go with the striking and submissions. The leg work was a good story to tell throughout the match as they broke the Authors down and actually went after them instead of running away and stealing a win. I liked the story here and it made for a good match.

War Machine is here.

Earlier today, Velveteen Dream promised a thirty second knockout of Kassius Ohno.

### Velveteen Dream vs. Kassius Ohno

Dream now has a muscular man and a woman to help him with his entrance, including a large pillow containing his custom made mouth piece. He's also now in boxing trunks for a rather sharp change of pace. After Ohno's entrance, Dream boxes the buckle a little bit. The fans count and Dream hits a big right hand to knock Ohno down at 27 seconds.

Dream dances around though (how Rocky I of him) and gets forearmed in the face, knocking the mouth piece out. Back up and Dream scores with a swinging spinebuster from two as the fans are almost entirely behind Dream here. We hit the chinlock until Ohno powers him into the corner, where Dream unloads with rights and lefts. Dream shouts DREAM OVER at Ohno, followed by a top rope double ax for two more. The second chinlock goes a bit better but Ohno powers out of it again, this time slamming Dream down.

Back up and Ohno easily wins a strike off, followed by the running backsplash. A superkick cuts Ohno off and the wind up DDT (with no snap this time around) gets two, followed by Dream's Death Valley Driver for the same. The rolling forearm drops Dream but it's another Death Valley Driver into the Purple Rainmaker (from the post) for the pin on Ohno at 10:46.

**Rating:** B-. Now where can I get a pair of those shorts? Dream needed this win and that's why you have someone like Ohno on the roster. He can hit the heck out of people but at the end of the day, he's going to get pinned off a big finisher. Dream just has the makings of a star though as

the fans buy into him, though he's dead in the water on the main roster where Cole and company would talk about every single thing he does and how they don't understand it. Good match here, but there was no way they could follow Dream's two previous matches.

We recap Ember Moon vs. Shayna Baszler. Shayna is the newcomer/outsider as a former mixed martial artist who has choked a bunch of women out. Moon won't stand for the bullying but Baszler says this has been her plan all along. Above all else though, this feud has shown how lame Ember is while Baszler has shown up and looks like a polished pro right out of the gate.

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

Moon is defending. Baszler easily takes her down to start and kicks Moon's leg out. Back up and Moon scores with some dropkicks to put Baszler out on the floor. A suicide dive drops her again but Baszler takes the hair down and unloads with strikes to the face and chest. Makes sense here as they're having Baszler easily win the stand-up fighting but getting beaten down in the wrestling.

Baszler steps on the arm like she did to Dakota Kai and it's off to an armbar. More knees and stomps to the arm have Moon in trouble before Baszler just pulls on the arm. Moon gets in a few slaps though, followed by a kick to the chest and a springboard spinning crossbody. The Eclipse connects but it hurts the arm even more, causing Moon to writhe in pain in the corner.

The trainer comes in to check on the arm and the fans are NOT happy with the delay. Baszler finally gets up and tries a cross armbreaker, only to have Moon get her feet on the ropes. The armbreaker goes on again in the middle of the ring with Baszler even pulling the legs back towards the middle, just in case. Somehow Moon rolls her over though and stacks Baszler up to retain at 10:11, sending Mauro into a huge MAMA MIA.

**Rating:** B. Moon escaped here and that's likely to set up a rematch where Baszler wins the title. I get the idea of not putting the title on Baszler just yet but Moon needs to get better in a hurry. They told a good story with the ending as the inexperienced Baszler was too focused

on one move and left herself vulnerable, which makes Ember look like a veteran who might have lost the physical battle but won the mental game. At the end of the day, the lack of ever defeating Asuka is hard to overcome and it's weighing her down a lot. This should help her though and having to fight from underneath is a good story for her.

Moon is helped out but Baszler sneaks up from behind and grabs the choke.

Ricochet (billed as Trevor "Ricochet" Mann) is here.

We recap Aleister Black vs. Adam Cole. Black knocked Cole out of the #1 contenders tournament by kicking him in the head, only to have Cole cost Black the tournament final. A match was set up but William Regal made it Extreme Rules, which might play more towards Cole's strengths.

### Adam Cole vs. Aleister Black

Extreme Rules. Black's entrance is surrounded by candles and smoke this time around, making it look even better. Black easily wins an early strike off and moonsaults into the seated position. Cole grabs a chair and there's the ECW chant that you knew was coming. That's taken away in no time and Black has a seat on the chair as Cole needs to come up with a better idea.

Black follows him out this time and gets caught with a few shots, allowing Cole to throw in some weapons. Both guys find kendo sticks but Black throws his away and says bring it on. He's either very skilled or very stupid. A few kicks to the chest have Black in trouble but the springboard moonsault is caned out of the air in a good looking crash. Cole's Backstabber with the kendo stick (White Russian Backstabber?) gets two and it's table time.

Black breaks up a superplex attempt and gets slammed off the top onto a trashcan. A running knee drops Cole again and Black sets up another table next to the first. That's not enough though as Black pulls out a ladder but Cole kicks him down and sets the unfolded ladder in the corner. Cole is bleeding from somewhere (might be his hand) and hammers away in the corner. Black fights up and drops Cole onto the ladder in a good looking crash.

With Cole down, Black goes up top but Cole throws him a chair and superkicks it into Black's head, sending him through the tables. Mauro: "HOLY BLEEP INDEED!" That's only good for two so Cole loads up two chairs next to each other. Black is back up though and hits an AA onto the top of the chairs (FREAKING OW MAN!!!) to probably break Cole's back. A sliding knee into the chair into Cole's face gets two as Fish and O'Reilly run in for the save. High/Low on the floor drops Black and it's time to load up the announcers' table.

Cue Sanity for the save (makes sense) with Killian Dain taking everyone out with a suicide dive. With Black still down, Cole tries a suplex through the table. That's broken up as well and the double knees (ala Sasha Banks) drives Cole through instead. Fans: "MAMA MIA!" Back in and Cole scores with his own superkick and grabs a chair. Of course he walks right into Black Mass (to the shoulder) for the pin at 21:58.

**Rating:** A-. This kept building and turned into a star making performance for both guys. Black is on a roll at this point and that Black Mass should put him into the title match at Takeover: New Orleans. This was better than I thought it would be as it started slowly but built into a brawl with Black finally being the last man standing by the end. Very good stuff here and easily the best part of the night so far.

Ethan Carter III, billed as EC3, is here and officially confirmed as a new signing.

We recap Andrade Cien Almas vs. Johnny Gargano. Almas has righted the ship after months of mediocrity, mainly thanks to the addition of Zelina Vega. Gargano had a nightmare of a 2017 and is on the comeback trail, finally turning himself back into Johnny Wrestling. Tonight is his chance at redemption, both by winning the title and beating Almas, who was a big part of his downward spiral.

NXT Title: Johnny Gargano vs. Andrade Cien Almas

Almas is defending and is played to the ring by a masked mariachi band. He also wears a mask to the ring but takes it off before getting inside. They start with a technical sequence and wrestle to a standoff as we see Johnny's wife Candice LeRae in the crowd. Neither finisher can connect

early on and Almas bails into the corner while waving a finger at Johnny. We start again with Gargano wrestling him down into an armbar but one heck of a chop gets the champ out of trouble.

The announcers recap the Almas story of letting his career fall apart as he gets sent outside but manages to avoid the running flip dive off the apron. Back in and Almas bends Johnny's neck across the top rope, followed by the chinlock. Johnny fights up but gets caught in the Tree of Woe. Almas misses the top rope stomp though and gets suplexed into the corner. A middle rope swinging Downward Spiral gives Johnny two and the slingshot spear is good for the same.

As usual, Vega has some awesome facial expressions as you can feel her panicking on the near falls, which sell them that much more. Almas catches him with a spinning faceplant for two before going up. The regular moonsault doesn't work but Almas lands on his feet and hits a standing version for two more in a smart sequence. Johnny's superkick gets the same and they're both down again.

Gargano puts him on the top but can't hit the sunset bomb. Almas misses the running knees in the corner but the slingshot spear is countered into a faceplant. A reverse tornado DDT gets two more and both guys are spent again. Excellent sequence. Almas can't hit the hammerlock DDT on the apron so Gargano slingshot DDTs him onto the apron instead. That's only good for a very close two back inside and Almas blocks the Gargano Escape. The running knees are broken up and there's the Lawn Dart to rock Almas again.

Vega's distraction lets Almas grab the DDT but that's reversed into a small package for a VERY close two. A low superkick gives Johnny two, with the camera panning over to tease interference but it just shows Vega panicking at the near fall. Almas cuts him off on top and it's the top rope double stomp onto the apron, followed by a hard toss to send Gargano into the apron again. Back in and the double knees are good for two and Almas is shocked. To be fair, I am too.

They fight back to their feet and Johnny somehow grabs a hurricanrana. The Gargano Escape goes on and Almas can't spin out. Vega grabs Almas'

hand and the distraction lets Almas rake Johnny's eyes. The hammerlock DDT is broken up and a backdrop puts Almas on the floor for a suicide dive of all things. Vega is back up with a hurricanrana to send Johnny into the steps though and the hammerlock DDT....gets two. They had me on that one.

Gargano rolls outside and Vega goes after him, drawing Candice over the barricade for the brawl. She chases Vega to the back, drawing a THANK YOU CANDICE chant. The slingshot DDT gets a VERY close two and the Gargano Escape goes on again....but the foot is on the ropes. They head to the apron again and Almas hits the running knees to drive Johnny's head into the post, leaving him with the far away look in his eyes. A draping hammerlock DDT FINALLY ends Gargano at 32:22.

**Rating:** A+. Oh yeah that was amazing. They had me multiple times on the near falls and I never once got bored throughout the whole thing. Gargano is ready to be NXT Champion at some point and not having Ciampa interfere was the right decision as their match doesn't need to be for the title. It's an epic back and forth match with the great near falls being traded near the end. It takes a lot to suck me in like that and they did it to perfection here. Outstanding match.

Post match Candice comes back to take Johnny to the back but they stop for the pose on the stage...AND TOMMASO CIAMPA BREAKS A CRUTCH OVER JOHNNY'S BACK! Ciampa walks away as Candice tends to Johnny to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** A. Is Takeover capable of having a bad show? Or even a bad match for that matter? Like I said coming in, this felt more like a collection of matches and it still blew me away. The worst match was probably Dream vs. Ohno and even that was above average. Nothing was following that main event though and now you have a double main event of Black vs. Almas and Gargano vs. Ciampa set for New Orleans. That alone makes for a great show and if they have a strong undercard (War Machine vs. Undisputed Era and two others would be more than enough), it could be an all time classic. Great show here of course.

Results

Undisputed Era b. Authors of Pain – Rollup to Razar

Velveteen Dream b. Kassius Ohno – Purple Rainmaker

Ember Moon b. Shayna Baszler – Rollup

Aleister Black b. Adam Cole – Black Mass

Andrade Cien Almas b. Johnny Gargano – Hanging hammerlock DDT

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# 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 kneeling 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 RO!" 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 Velvetten 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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