

# Went To NXT Takeover: Dallas

I'm half dead already so no full live report at the moment (though the full reviews are coming eventually) but here are some quick highlights. 1. American Alpha is so over it's scary.

2. The Aries match ended REALLY fast, almost to the point that I thought Aries was injured.

3. The Zayn vs. Nakamura match woke everyone up like few matches I've ever seen. That was amazing live.

4. "BOTH THESE GUYS" is the best chant they've had in a long time.

5. The ending of the women's title match really didn't work as it just ended out of nowhere. Also Asuka needed to work on the shoulder to set that up.

6. The towel was the biggest heel of the night.

7. This wasn't a great show and is probably in the bottom tier of Takeovers.

8. I was tired at this show so a second viewing might severely change my mind.

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## New Column: NXT Takeover: Dallas Preview

I think the name speaks for itself here.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-nxt-takeover-dallas-prev>

# NXT – March 30, 2016: They Even Go Home Better Than Raw

## NXT

Date: March 30, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Corey Graves, Tom Phillips

It's the go home show for Friday's Takeover: Dallas and the card is set in stone. Therefore tonight is all about the final push towards Texas, meaning all six matches are going to get some solid TV time. Announced for tonight is Bull Dempsey vs. Samoa Joe in what should be a good slaughtering. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

### American Alpha vs. Corey Hollis/John Skylar

Jordan powers Hollis into the corner to start, easily lifting him up like a small child. Gable comes in and rides Hollis on the mat for a bit before cranking on a hammerlock. Fans: "BREAK IT OFF GABLE, BREAK IT OFF!" It's off to Skylar for a wristlock of his own, only to be taken down with ease. A slingshot armdrag doesn't do much damage but looks very cool, much like a lot of Gable's offense. The jobbers actually get in a swinging slam on Gable, only to tick him off and earn Hollis and Skylar an overhead belly to belly each. Grand Amplitude puts Hollis away at 4:40.

**Rating:** C-. Standard squash here with American Alpha looking awesome, just like they were supposed to. The title match on Friday should be a lot more entertaining as the Revival should be a really solid opposition

for Gable and Jordan, though I can't imagine anything but new champions.

Finn Balor is tired of hearing about Samoa Joe's obsession with being NXT Champion because he has an obsession of his own. That obsession is the reason that he beat Kevin Owens to become NXT Champion and the way he defeated Samoa Joe the first time back in London. Two more days Joe.

Video on Baron Corbin attacking Austin Aries a few weeks back.

#### Baron Corbin vs. Mike Culori

Mike actually gets in a dropkick to knock Corbin into the corner to start but it only earns him Deep Six for the pin at 1:17.

Culori gets the End of Days post match.

Video on Shinsuke Nakamura with people talking about how amazing he is.

No Way Jose video.

#### Revival vs. Tucker Knight/Steve Cutler

Non-title. Dawson takes Cutler into the corner to start and it's quickly off to Wilder, who kicks Cutler in the face to keep control. The slow beating continues with Dawson getting two off a gordbuster. Cutler finally escapes a suplex and it's off to the much bigger Knight to clean house. The champs get Knight to chase them though and it's the Shatter Machine for the pin at 4:45.

**Rating:** C-. Slow and steady here as is always the case with the Revival. They really do work an old school style and it really does still work, though the fun part is going to be seeing them get knocked off by a more energetic act. It's still cool to see the known jobbers in NXT and it's even better that they still get in enough offense to make them look credible.

We look at Joe choking Dempsey out last week.

Bull Dempsey thinks Joe is jealous of Dempsey's physique. Tonight though, Joe gets a cheat meal in the form of these two fists.

### Apollo Crews vs. Alex Riley

Riley hammers away to start and is looking aggressive like he has in recent appearances. Crews fights up and starts getting athletic though with a jumping clothesline into a nipup, followed by the toss into the Batista Bomb for the pin at 1:58.

Post match here's Elias Samson to sing a song for Crews, warning him to take his time and avoid the danger. Graves: "With a voice like that, no wonder he's homeless." Samson backs away from a challenge though.

Baron Corbin finds it interesting that Austin Aries hasn't showed up since the beatdown a few weeks ago. After Dallas, Aries can "go sit next to Virgil at one of those conventions and beg people to remember him." Oh man that was glorious.

Video on Bayley vs. Asuka, focusing on Bayley growing up in front of our eyes and becoming a role model for all fans from men to women to children. Then Asuka debuted and was immediately the most dangerous woman in NXT. As Graves put it: "Don't disrespect Asuka or she'll kick you in the skull." The women aren't sure who to pick because Bayley will never quit but Asuka is like nothing anyone has ever faced before. This was the only match they could have gone with and it's going to be awesome.

Sami Zayn is ready for Nakamura, even though he has an Intercontinental Title match of his own two days later. He knows a thing or two about making a name for yourself in NXT and doesn't think he would be here if he hadn't beaten Cesaro three years back. Yeah he may face Nakamura again down the line but there's only one chance to make a first impression at the biggest NXT show ever on the biggest wrestling weekend ever. Sami isn't about to step aside and let Nakamura make his name that easily.

### Samoa Joe vs. Bull Dempsey

Dempsey runs him over to start and fires off some heavy right hands in the corner. Joe gets bored being on defense though and kicks Bull in the head, followed by an STO and the Koquina Clutch for the submission at 1:31.

William Regal has to send wrestlers down to break the Clutch but Joe beats them up as well. The hold goes on again until Finn Balor runs in for the real save. Balor dropkicks him into the barricade but Joe drags him to the announcers' table as this turns into a fight. Security holds them apart until Balor dives off the table with an AJ Styles forearm. They're finally separated to wrap things up.

**Overall Rating:** B+. This was a show where the wrestling meant nothing. Instead this was all about hyping up Takeover and that's exactly what they did. Every match got some time or some kind of a buildup package and I want to see Takeover more than I did coming into tonight. Friday looks like a great night of wrestling matches and that's exactly what Takeover has become: two hours of entertaining wrestling, which is all it needs to be.

### Results

American Alpha b. Corey Hollis/John Skylar – Grand Amplitude to Hollis

Baron Corbin b. Mike Culori – Deep Six

Revival b. Tucker Knight/Steve Cutler – Shatter Machine to Knight

Apollo Crews b. Alex Riley – Toss sitout powerbomb

Samoa Joe b. Bull Dempsey – Koquina Clutch

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# NXT – March 23, 2016: Business As Usual

## NXT

Date: March 23, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

We're getting very close to Takeover: Dallas with just two shows to go before perhaps the biggest show in the history of the promotion. The card is almost entirely set now and it should be interesting to see how they final building process goes. NXT tends to be good at this so hopefully the trend continues. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

### Elias Samson vs. Johnny Gargano

Samson is still undefeated and starts fast by pounding Johnny down in the corner. I'm hoping this doesn't turn into a squash as Gargano deserves better for the Johnny Wrestling name alone. With Johnny down, Samson gets a bit distracted by going into something like a trance. Samson charges into a boot in the corner and eats a kick to the head, only to catch a charging Johnny with a knee to the ribs. Another jumping knee is countered with a quick rollup to give Gargano the pin at 2:18. Well that was sudden.

Samson lays Gargano out with the neckbreaker post match and sends him into the post for good measure. He loads up another neckbreaker on the ramp but Apollo Crews comes out for the save.

Takeover video.

### Rich Swann vs. Finn Balor

Non-title of course. Balor takes him to the mat with a wristlock to start and Rich can't get to his feet. Instead it's off to a headlock before the champ easily takes it down to a hammerlock. Back up and a good looking dropkick staggers Balor, followed by a spinning kick to the face. Another dropkick puts Balor on the floor and the fans are behind Swann here. Balor is all fired up now though and sends Swann outside on the other side for a hard kick to the head. The Coup de Grace sets up Bloody Sunday for the pin on Swann at 5:22.

**Rating:** C+. I can always go for a quick match where a big name actually has to break a sweat to beat someone a few levels beneath him. It's also a good idea to get Balor out there every now and then to make sure that people don't forget how good he really is. They're doing a nice job with Swann in his first two matches as he's gotten to show off in losing efforts.

Emma and Dana Brooke are ready for Emma's rematch with Asuka. Dana has been helping her train and tonight Emma is going to do the job. She also confirms that she's been out due to injury.

#### Sarah Dobson vs. Alexa Bliss

Bliss is back in the old pink attire. Dobson takes her into the corner to start but misses a charge to give Bliss a quick two. We hit an armbar on Dobson as the announcers argue over how big a star Bliss really is. Bliss misses a charge in the corner and Dobson gets two off a high cross body. This brings Blake and Murphy to the apron for a distraction and cheap shot, setting up the Sparkle Splash to give Bliss the pin at 4:12.

**Rating:** D. Much like on the main roster, you can really see the line between the wrestlers and the Divas. Bliss is really just out there because of her looks instead of her ring skills, though she's awesome as the evil heel manager. Dobson wasn't bad from what I can see here and I know she's done some good stuff out on the indies.

Samoa Joe has nothing to say.

#### Bull Dempsey vs. Danny Burch

Well this is a bit more awkward. No match though as Samoa Joe comes out and destroys both guys before shouting about how he's coming for Balor and the title.

Video on the awesomeness that is American Alpha with the two of them talking about their paths through the amateur ranks towards NXT. None of that matters unless they win the NXT Tag Team Titles though.

Jose No Way is coming.

### Emma vs. Asuka

Emma actually takes over with a headlock to start but Asuka reverses into one of her own. A jumping cross armbreaker has Emma in major trouble and the flying hip attack gets two for Asuka as we take a break. Back with Asuka working on a hammerlock until she gets bored and switches over to an ankle lock.

Emma finally kicks her to the floor and starts pounding away before putting her feet on Asuka's shoulders and pulling at the arms. It's off to a regular chinlock with Emma putting her knee in the back. As has been the case all match, the hold is quickly broken so Emma can put her in the Tree of Woe for some shots to the ribs.

Asuka is up at two though and the frustration is starting to set in. They run the ropes a few times until another hip attack drops Emma as the comeback begins. Emma dropkicks her into the ropes but Asuka bounces off for another hip attack. A good looking German suplex sends Emma flying and it's the Asuka Lock for the tap out at 15:14.

**Rating:** B. This was a very nice change of pace as these two still have some nice chemistry together. They were going with an enhanced version of the same formula from Balor vs. Swann here as the bigger name had to work harder than expected with a challenger. They've done an awesome job of setting up Bayley and Asuka as unstoppable, meaning the match is going to have some awesome buzz going on.

**Overall Rating:** C+. Nothing great here but the build towards the big show has been awesome so far. The card is mostly set at this point and there's



only so much that a few more TV shows are going to be able to do. They're doing a good job of going around the card and giving everything a good build so I actually have some faith in what they might be able to pull off in Dallas.

### Results

Johnny Gargano b. Elias Samson – Rollup

Finn Balor b. Rich Swann – Bloody Sunday

Alexa Bliss b. Sarah Dobson – Sparkle Splash

Asuka b. Emma – Asuka Lock

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# **NXT – March 16, 2016: The Construction Project**

## **NXT**

Date: March 16, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

Takeover is looming and we finally have a main event for the show. Last week Samoa Joe beat Sami Zayn in a two out of three falls match to earn the title shot against NXT Champion Finn Balor in just over two weeks. The rest of the card is mostly set as well and it should be interesting to see where things go from here. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of Joe beating Zayn last week.

Opening sequence.

Here's Sami Zayn to get things going. Last week he went to war against a 300lb Samoan and for those of you who have never done that, it's really not that fun. Sami isn't the slightest bit ashamed of what happened last week and if he had fingers just a few inches longer, he might be going to Takeover for the title shot.

Either way though, Sami wants to do something special in Dallas and here's Commissioner William Regal with an announcement. Sami does indeed deserve something special in Dallas so here's his opponent: SHINSUKE NAKAMURA, who pops up on screen to say that he's coming to NXT. As you might expect, the fans go INSANE.

#### Hype Bros vs. Angelo Dawkins/Kenneth Crawford

Rawley is a big crowd favorite to start and shoves Crawford around the ring early on. Dawkins comes in so Mojo starts doing some football drills to keep him in the corner. A big shot drops Dawkins and Mojo declares that both of them ain't hyped. Ryder comes in for some of his signature stuff before bringing Rawley back in to clean house. A discus punch from Rawley sets up the Hype Ryder to put Crawford away at 3:24.

**Rating:** D+. Just a squash here as the Hype Bros continue to be an entertaining act and get to build themselves up before being fed to some other team who can beat them on their way to a title shot. Not bad or anything here and it's a really good sign that there are jobbers who you recognize instead of bigger names losing all the time.

Video on NXT at the Arnold Classic, complete with a cameo by Arnold himself.

Emma and Dana Brooke run into Deonna Purrazzo and laugh about her loss a few weeks back. Deonna is ready for Emma tonight and trash is spoken. Dana promises that Emma will take it seriously but pats Deonna on the head anyway.

#### Deonna Purrazzo vs. Emma

Emma takes her down to start and stands on Deonna's hair like only a villain can. Some choking sets up the former Emma Sandwich for two before it's off to the chinlock. Deonna fights back with a few elbows to the chin but misses a charge into the corner, setting up the Dilemma. Dana is very pleased as the Emma Lock makes Deonna tap at 3:49.

**Rating:** D+. Emma and Dana are similar to the Hype Bros as they're not likely to ever get the title on their own but defeating them could look like a big deal for the right opponent. Assuming Asuka takes the title from Bayley in Texas, Emma (or Dana if she's ever healthy) could be a good choice for a TV challenger before Asuka fights a refocused Nia Jax.

#### Tommaso Ciampa vs. Jesse Sorensen

Ciampa is very aggressive to start and pounds Jesse into the corner, including a hard running knee to the head. A discus lariat gets two but Jesse actually makes a comeback with a good looking dropkick. Sorensen gets caught on top though, allowing Ciampa to drive a knee through Jesse's legs into the chest for a unique looking move. That floatover armbar makes Jesse tap at 2:30. Ciampa looked good here, maybe as good as he has aside from that match against Joe.

We look at Asuka saving Bayley from Nia Jax and Eva Marie.

#### Nia Jax/Eva Marie vs. Bayley/Asuka

Bayley and Nia get things going and the champ is thrown into the corner for the tag off to Eva. That's just fine with Bayley as she easily takes Eva to the mat and brings in Asuka. The rapid knees and kicks have Eva looking...well moderately annoyed because she doesn't know how to sell anything. It's back to Bayley but Nia gets a blind tag and plants her with a Samoan drop. Eva comes in again to crank on both arms but Bayley

pops up because she's Bayley and it's Eva Marie. Nia comes in and accidentally drops a leg on Eva, allowing the Bayley to Belly to put Eva away at 4:01.

**Rating:** C. There's something about that charisma that Bayley brings to any arena that always makes me smile. She's just hard not to like and it helps that she's wrestling like a main event star now instead of a goofy comedy wrestler. Hopefully this wraps up Eva and Nia for now and they'll split soon like they should have before they got together in the first place.

Post match Bayley and Asuka stand next to each other, allowing Regal to come out and make Asuka #1 contender for Dallas.

We look back at Baron Corbin beating up Austin Aries two weeks ago.

Aries is at his home for a satellite interview. He received a lot of offers to wrestle around the world but NXT was where he wanted to go. After the attack, Regal came and apologized to him but there was nothing to be sorry for. Corbin should have attacked him at his face because Aries has been a champion everywhere he's gone. Aries hasn't been handed anything because he earned his NXT contract. It wasn't because he's 6'6 and 300lbs but because he's earned it over the last ten years. In Dallas on April 1, Corbin is going to learn that it's a great day to be great but a bad day to be Baron Corbin.

### American Alpha vs. Vaudevillains

For the #1 contendership. Gable takes Gotch to the mat to start but Gotch kicks his hands away and does something like an enziguri from the mat. Jordan comes in for a double dropkick and a double clothesline to put the Vaudevillains on the floor. Back from a break with English holding Gable in a chinlock before it's off to Gotch for a chinlock of his own. Those dastardly villains.

Gable finally sends Gotch throat first into the ropes and makes the tag off to Jordan. Everything breaks down and Gotch has to break up Grand Amplitude ("their finisher") according to Graves. A BIG German suplex drops English with Gotch diving in for a save. Gotch and Jordan go to the

floor as English gets two on Gable off a sitout powerbomb. Not that it matters as Jordan comes back in for Grand Amplitude and the pin on English at 10:25.

**Rating:** C+. It's getting more and more clear every single week that American Alpha is just flat out better than any other team on the roster right now. Dash and Dawson are talented but they're much more of a niche team than anything else. Alpha continues to look awesome all the time and they're so much fun to watch in the same vein as Haas and Benjamin used to be.

**Overall Rating:** C. This was a building show instead of anything worth watching and there's nothing wrong with that so close to probably the biggest NXT show of all time. There were three matches set up tonight and each one of them should be something fun to see. This was more of an important show than a good one and there's nothing wrong with that, especially since NXT continues to know how to build a card at a much higher level than WWE.

### Results

Hype Bros b. Angelo Dawkins/Kenneth Crawford – Hype Ryder to Crawford

Emma b. Deonna Purrazzo – Emma Lock

Tommaso Ciampa b. Jesse Sorensen – Floatover armbar

Bayley/Asuka b. Nia Jax/Eva Marie – Bayley to Belly to Marie

American Alpha b. Vaudevillains – Grand Amplitude to English

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# NXT – February 17, 2016: The TV Fastlane

## NXT

Date: February 17, 2016

Location: CFE Arena, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

Tonight is a big show for NXT as we'll find out the #1 contender for Finn Balor's NXT Title with the title shot coming at Takeover: Dallas in about six weeks. Other than that we're starting to see the next challenger to Bayley's Women's Title as Asuka seems ready to come after the belt. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Sami vs. Joe to bring us to tonight.

Opening sequence.

Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady/American Alpha vs. Scott Dawson/Dash Wilder/Blake and Murphy

No Carmella this week. Dawson and Gable get things going with the fans cheering for Chad as you would expect. Gable rides him to the mat and Dawson is quickly frustrated. Everything breaks down and the good guys clear the ring in a big stereo throw over the top. Back from a break with Blake holding Gable in a chinlock before Dawson scores with a good looking elbow to the jaw.

The heels keep taking turns on Gable in the corner until Dash plants him for two and puts on a chinlock. Back up and Gable collides with Wilder, finally allowing for the tag off to Jordan. Everything breaks down with Colin feeding Dawson into a belly to belly from Jason. Grand Amplitude

gets two on Dawson with Dash making the save. Not that it matters as the Rocket Launcher puts Dawson away a few seconds later at 12:58.

**Rating:** C+. Totally standard and run of the mill “take four teams and throw them together into a big match” deal here and there’s nothing wrong with that. American Alpha should be ready to go after the belts in Dallas while Enzo and Cass should be on the main roster by then. Good match here though, even with the heels being badly outshined.

Deonna Purrazzo is ready for a shot at revenge on Asuka when Emma and Dana Brook come in to say they run this place.

#### Deonna Purrazzo vs. Asuka

Asuka starts fast with some kicks to the ribs and a leg bar to make things even worse. Back up and Deonna fires off some forearms but makes the mistake of slapping Asuka in the face. Asuka easily takes her down into an ankle lock before tucking the ankle behind Deonna’s back for a suplex. A tease of the Asuka Lock sets up a hard spinning kick to the head to put Purrazzo away at 2:53. Total squash.

We look back at Eva Marie and Nia Jax beating down Bayley and Carmella until Asuka made the save.

Nia and Eva say they were justified last week because Nia would have won the battle royal if she had been healthy. Asuka needs to stay out of their business. Eva sounded better here but still very scripted while Jax sounded natural.

#### Tye Dillinger vs. Alex Riley

Apparently Riley has called NXT a joke, which sends Graves on a tirade against Alex’s facial hair. They fight over wrist control to start until Tye nips up and shouts TEN. A hard clothesline from Riley earns a ONE as Graves thinks Riley has been ripped off by an Uber driver to make him this mad. Alex’s chinlock doesn’t go anywhere and Tye comes back with a Thesz Press, only to charge into a hard right hand. Riley grabs a full nelson but gets rolled up for the pin at 3:16.

**Rating:** D+. Not much here but that’s the case almost every time Riley is

out there. The promotion has passed him by since his injury, though to be fair it had probably passed him by years ago. Dillinger has something there with the TEN gimmick but he needs something else to go with it.

Finn Balor congratulates Apollo Crews on a great match last week and knows that Sami and Joe are going to give it their all tonight.

Baron Corbin comes in to see Regal and demands to be put in the #1 contenders match tonight. That gets him nowhere so Baron threatens violence and leaves.

### Sami Zayn vs. Samoa Joe

Winner gets the title shot at some point in the future. Sami bails from a kick to start but gets caught in a wristlock to take him to the mat. Back up and Sami fights out of a headlock before running Joe over with a shoulder. The SAMI chants replace the OLE's as Sami grabs a wristlock. Joe gets sent to the floor and Sami teases a dive but has to backflip into the ring again as we take a break.

Back with Joe nailing a hard chop and catching a charging Sami with the Rock Bottom out of the corner. Sami tries slugging it out for some reason so Joe sweeps the leg to take over again as Zayn's face goes right into the mat. A hard kick to the face keeps Sami in trouble as they still haven't really cranked it up like you would expect them to. At least we're getting some loud strikes from Joe to make you cringe every time.

Sami tries to fight up but gets kicked again, only to come back with a clothesline to put Joe down. The Blue Thunder Bomb is easily blocked but Sami finally pulls him up for two. That's fine with Joe as he kicks Sami in the face (why try anything too complicated) and drops a backsplash for two more.

Back up and Joe tries another clothesline but has to fight out of a Koji Clutch attempt. A snap powerslam gets two for Joe but now it's Sami slugging away. Joe's enziguri in the corner staggers Zayn but he's still able to suplex Joe into the corner. The Helluva Kick is countered into the Koquina Clutch but Sami gets a rope. Sami is almost out of but still escapes the Muscle Buster, setting up the Helluva Kick for the pin out of



nowhere at 16:12.

**Rating:** A-. This kept a slow pace throughout but they were hitting each other so hard that it was difficult to not get sucked in. Sami collapsing into the pin at the end is perfect for him as he is always fighting from behind and both guys are even in the end. This was the usual good stuff from a big time NXT main event, but did you really expect anything else?

However, all four shoulders are down and the referee looks confused. Regal comes out and gets an explanation but the referee says he can't pick a #1 contender because that was a draw. Confusion reigns as we go off the air.

**Overall Rating:** B+. It's another strong episode of NXT with the big main event anchoring the whole thing. They're doing a good job of setting up things for the Dallas show while not blowing anything big or making it seem like they're trying to stretch it out. At this point we're only six weeks away from Wrestlemania weekend so just let everything be built up especially well instead of doing the whole thing early.

### Results

Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady/American Alpha b. Scott Dawson/Dash Wilder/Blake and Murphy – Rocket Launcher to Dawson

Asuka b. Deonna Purrazzo – Spinning kick to the head

Tye Dillinger b. Alex Riley – Rollup

Sami Zayn vs. Samoa Joe went to a draw

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# NXT – February 10, 2016: Hug Her Up

## NXT

Date: February 10, 2016

Location: CFE Arena, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

We're on the road again and in this case we have a big main event with Bayley defending the Women's Title against her friend Carmella. This isn't quite on the level of the Takeover shows and title shots but the big TV shows are almost always good with this hopefully being no exception. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

The arena looks almost the same as Full Sail, save for the lack of a ramp.

## Baron Corbin vs. Johnny Gargano

The fans chant for JOHNNY WRESTLING and he avoids a charge in the corner before pounding in left hands. Corbin will have none of that and throws Gargano around, followed by some heavy stomping in the corner. We get some good old fashioned yelling at the referee before Corbin slaps on a cobra clutch. Gargano reverses into a choke but gets sent hard into the Deep Six. End of Days is countered with a HARD superkick for two and Corbin rolls to the floor where he's almost out on his feet. Gargano goes right after him but walks into End of Days for the pin at 5:50.

**Rating:** C. Gargano is a good hand in there and the Johnny Wrestling name is awesome. I don't think anyone was expecting Corbin to lose again here

but it was cool to see someone get close like that. Nice opener here as it's almost always worth seeing a match happening for the sake of having a match, especially when it starts the show.

We look back at the end of Zayn vs. Joe vs. Corbin.

Sami is disappointed in the ruling but is willing to go through whatever to get the NXT Title back.

Vaudevillains vignette.

### Hype Bros vs. Corey Hollis/John Skyler

Graves is all over Mojo as the announcers disagree over whether the Internet Title is still being defended. Ryder dropkicks Hollis in the face to start and it's off to Rawley, who declares that Hollis AIN'T HYPED. A double clothesline sends Hollis and Skyler out to the floor and the Hype Bros are in control as you would expect. Back in and Ryder gets in a bit of trouble before Hollis charges into some knees. The hot tag brings in Rawley to clean house and Ryder adds a Broski Boot. The Hype Ryder puts Hollis away at 3:32.

**Rating:** D+. Just a squash here but the Hype Bros continue to have some excellent energy out there. There's nothing wrong with a fun team who beats up the lower level acts but then goes nowhere against the top level guys. Let the Hype Bros be a goofy team and then have them lose to some more important team and everything will be fine.

Bayley says keeping the title has been harder than winning it but she's not ready to let it go yet. Carmella is ready to make the most of her shot and their friendship isn't in jeopardy.

### Alexa Bliss vs. Cameron

I had forgotten about Cameron and her entrance talking (I hear no singing anywhere) of Girl Bye. Cameron armdrags her down before choking on the middle rope. Alexa snaps the throat across the top rope and the fans are really pleased with Bliss' aggression. Bliss is instantly the face here as the fans start booing Cameron out of the building on near principle alone. It's nowhere near Eva Marie's level but they clearly don't want to

see her.

Cameron gets two off a running flip neckbreaker but Bliss puts her down and misses the moonsault into the double knees. It doesn't matter as Cameron sells it anyway (this one was on Bliss as her knees didn't really even get close to connecting), setting up the Sparkle Splash for the pin at 4:13.

**Rating:** D-. Other than Bliss looking good, this was a borderline disaster. Cameron is some kind of weird flashback to the horrifying days of Divas past where they were all about the looks and how well they filled out tight costumes. This is a different era and the women like Cameron just aren't going to cut it when we're likely about to see Bayley carry Carmella to a good match in a few minutes.

Enzo and Cass are ready to start their pursuit of back to back Tag Teams of the Year. Enzo: "We're back to back like Lethal Weapon 2." American Alpha comes in to say this is their year before hyping up an eight man tag next week.

#### Elias Samson vs. Jesse Sorensen

Corey starts things off with a big rant about going to Pittsburgh and being disgusted by all the people playing Nickleback songs as Samson cleans house. The fans get in a DRIFT AWAY chant at Samson, who responds by dropping knees and ripping at Jesse's face. The snap neckbreaker is good enough to pin Soresen at 2:38.

We look back at Finn Balor pinning Apollo Crews last week.

Crews has no regrets and promises a new Crews next time.

#### Women's Title: Carmella vs. Bayley

Carmella is challenging. After the Big Match Intros, it's time to trade some early holds with neither of them getting the advantage. Carmella's wristlock has Bayley in some trouble but the fans get her back up with a "HUG HER UP BAYLEY! HUG HER UP!" chant. Bayley slams her down and we take a break.

Back with Bayley cranking on the arms but Carmella slams her into the mat a few times. A hurricanrana staggers Bayley but she sends Carmella into the buckle to take over. Bayley gets sent to the floor though and Carmella actually busts out a suicide cross body for an NXT chant. She even does it again for two back inside and the Staten Island Shuffle looks to set up crossface, only to have Bayley cradle her for two. We hit a nice pinfall reversal sequence with some very close rollups until Bayley keeps her down for the pin at 11:03.

**Rating:** C+. Yep Bayley is amazing. This was all the match needed to be and Carmella got to have the match of her career so far out there. No one was expecting this to be a masterpiece or even very good so just a nice wrestling match with little drama is just fine. It's all about Takeover for Bayley now and that's all it should be about.

Post match Eva Marie and Nia Jax beat Carmella down. Bayley gets taken out as well until Asuka makes the save. Asuka looks at Bayley's title and smiles that creepy grin of hers.

Samoa Joe says that Sami has no triple threat to hide behind next week. I like this whole ending the show with a promo for the upcoming show. You don't get that enough.

**Overall Rating:** B-. Just a nice wrestling show this week which seemed to set up one of the title matches for Dallas. As usual they were going about their business and getting things done as they needed to. Next week's match will be fun and should give us another match for Takeover (if not earlier) as things continue to roll along very nicely around here.

### Results

Baron Corbin b. Johnny Gargano – End of Days

Hype Bros b. Corey Hollis/John Skyler – Hype Ryder to Hollis

Alexa Bliss b. Cameron – Sparkle Splash

Elias Samson b. Jesse Sorensen – Swinging neckbreaker

Bayley b. Carmella – Rollup

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## NXT – February 3, 2016: It's Like Being A Proud Parent

### NXT

Date: February 3, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

It's a big week here on NXT as we have a non-title match between NXT Champion Finn Balor and Apollo Crews, who had a shot at the title late last year which was interrupted with the match pretty much even. In addition to that we should be getting some updates on the ending to last week's triple threat match which ended in a double submission. Let's get to it.

We open with a quick preview of Crews vs. Balor.

Opening sequence.

Vaudevillains vs. Hype Bros

The Bros have quite the long entrance with smoke coming down from the ceiling while they pose on the buckles. Mojo rolls English up for two to start as Corey talks about Alf. It's off to Ryder for a running seated Blockbuster (think a Hennig Necksnap from the other way) but Gotch grabs Zack's feet to take over.

Simon comes in legally to put on a chinlock as the announcers try to figure out when the Vaudevillains fell off track, which sounds like code for starting their heel turn. Ryder kicks both villains away and makes the tag off to Mojo so Graves can make Ghostbusters jokes due to the bright green gear. Everything breaks down and Ryder misses the Broski Boot, setting up the Whirling Dervish to pin Zack at 4:16.

**Rating:** C. Totally fine match here though I'm really not sure about either of these teams going anywhere. The Bros are going to stay over no matter what they do based on their incredible energy alone so let them have a few wins here and there to give them a bit of credibility. The Vaudevillains on the other hand.....I'm not sure how much further they're really going to go.

We look back at Carmella winning the battle royal to become #1 contender a few weeks back.

It's time for a sitdown interview with Carmella where she talks about her dad being a wrestler in the 90s (albeit a jobber) who taught her a bunch of submission grappling. Carmella can't wait for her title shot next week because she and Bayley are going to be friends no matter what. Tonight she's going to prove how she deserves to be champion when she defeats Emma. This was a VERY toned down Carmella and showed a completely different side of her which worked better than I was expecting.

Scott Dawson and Dash Wilder are tired of hearing the same things from Enzo Amore and Colin Cassady because they've demanded shot after shot. Not that it matters because they're never going to win any of them since they're just not that good. They're fine with giving them one more shot because it's not going to work.

Carmella vs. Emma

They trade headlocks to start until Emma takes her down and pounds in right hands. A twisting wristlock keeps Carmella on the mat and Emma pulls on both arms at the same time. Carmella fights up but gets pulled down by the hair in a hurry. Emma loads up a butterfly suplex but gets countered into a backslide of all things for the pin at 4:16.

**Rating:** D+. Well it wasn't the most interesting thing in the world but it did exactly what it was designed to do. Carmella gets a clean win over someone with some credibility around here, which is really necessary with just a week to go before the title shot against Bayley next week. It's probably just a one off match so do what you can in the limited time you have.

We look at the end of last week's triple threat.

Sami Zayn has looked at the video multiple times and thinks he should win because he had the Sharpshooter on longer. He has faith in the outcome.

Joe has nothing to say.

Video on American Alpha.

Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady vs. ???/???

Before the match, Enzo reiterates that if he and Cass had a dime for every time they were knocked down and didn't get back up, they would have zero dimes. They are hard bodies and there's only ONE WORD to describe people who try to knock them down. Enzo easily takes Jobber #1 down to start and does a little dance before scoring off a big knee lift. Cass comes in and throws his partner into Jobber #1 as the announcers have no idea what to call these guys. #2 is LAUNCHED to the floor and the Rocket Launcher ends this in a hurry at 2:14.

Apollo Crews says he gets to prove himself tonight after having that taken away in his first shot at Finn Balor.

William Regal has made his decision on the #1 contendership but Baron Corbin comes into his office to interrupt. There will be a rematch but Corbin isn't going to be involved. Instead, it's going to be Zayn vs. Joe for the title shot at some point in the future.



### Asuka vs. Santana Garrett

Garrett is quickly sent into the ropes for the running hip attack, followed by a HARD shot to the face. Asuka misses a running knee to the face though and gets rolled up for two. Something like a leapfrog into a cross armbreaker has Garrett in trouble and the Asuka Lock is good for the submission at 2:26.

Finn Balor is looking forward to seeing Zayn vs. Joe but tonight he's going to prove to Crews that he may be good but he's not the best.

### Apollo Crews vs. Finn Balor

Non-title and non-Demon for Balor. They shake hands to start and Balor starts cranking on an armbar. A headlock keeps Crews in trouble and they're certainly taking their time here. Crews is stuck in the hold for a full minute but he does keep making Finn work with some rollups. Apollo nips up and scores with a dropkick, which seems to make the announcers think everything is even.

We take a break and come back with Balor caught in a chinlock. Finn rolls through a sunset flip to dropkick a seated Crews before going back to the armbar. Crews gets up one more time for another escape and the champ is getting frustrated. It's very short lived though as Balor takes him right back down into another armbar as the slow pace continues. Another counter is broken up so Finn knocks him to the floor for a BIG flip dive.

A top rope double stomp to the back (not the Coup de Grace) gets two on Crews and now the shock is setting in. Crews throws him into the air for two off a big Samoan Drop, only to get caught in a Sling Blade. That's fine with Crews who blocks the basement dropkick and gets two more off the gorilla press/standing moonsault. Balor kicks him in the head and scores with a second Sling Blade, followed by the Coup de Grace for no cover. Instead it's the Bloody Sunday (not named) for the pin at 15:03.

**Rating:** B-. This was an interesting one with a nice story of Balor controlling because he's just flat out better but Crews getting back into things when the match was wrestled in his style. Balor winning in the end with the bigger finisher worked, though the announcers and crowd really

didn't seem to get as into this as they were shooting for. Balor certainly has the stuff but Crews hasn't really shown that he can do anything more than be athletic.

Balor helps him to his feet post match and they shake hands again. The announcers confirm that it's Zayn vs. Joe in two weeks to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B. As usual, they're building up the big TV shows (taped in a bigger arena to make things feel more special) by using every bit of the TV time they have. Not only are they setting up stuff for the coming weeks, they're also planting seeds for what's coming at Takeover in Dallas. Watching this show is like watching your kid succeed in school and doing everything you want them to do. It's such a nice feeling and they never let me down.

### Results

Vaudevillains b. Hype Bros – Whirling Dervish to Ryder

Carmella b. Emma – Backslide

Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady b. ???/??? – Rocket Launcher

Asuka b. Santana Garrett – Asuka Lock

Finn Balor b. Apollo Crews – Bloody Sunday

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# 2015 Awards: Rookie of the Year

This might be the trickiest of all as you could say Sting is a rookie as he had his first WWE match in 2015. Since that could make things really complicated though, we'll go with people I consider rookies, meaning I might not consider some of your choices.

We'll start with someone outside WWE because I'm a WWE mark or something. ROH's Dalton Castle had debuted a few years earlier but changed his gimmick and debuted in the Top Prospect Tournament in the early part of the year. This turned into a great run for him as he became one of the more entertaining guys on the roster with a surprisingly strong offense and a great character. He's one of the people I enjoy most when watching ROH and his charisma alone will take him a long way.

Asuka is really kind of cheating as she's been wrestling for over ten years. However, she debuted in NXT and was instantly the second (at worst) woman on the roster. It's pretty clear Asuka vs. Bayley is coming at Takeover in Dallas and it should be one of the most awesome matches they've had....well since the last time Bayley had a big showdown match. This is a stretch but she's a rookie in WWE at least and that's close enough.

Speaking of rookie women in NXT, we have Nia Jax, who actually did debut in 2015. I know her character is limited and I still don't get why she and Eva Marie are teaming, but she played a perfect Vader to Bayley's Sting, which is really impressive given that she was debuting six months prior to that. I don't know how far she can go, but Nia is a great monster with a great look.

However, we finally have the runaway winner in Chad Gable. This is a guy who just gets it and was ready for the main roster about ten seconds after he debuted. Gable is the closest thing to another version of Kurt

Angle as he went from the Olympics to the WWE where he's a comedic goon who was capable of out wrestling anyone. This guy could be something very special in the future and he's just fun to watch, especially when he's with Jason Jordan.

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# NXT – January 13, 2016: That Weird Starting Point

## NXT

Date: January 13, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

It's the first regular show of the new year and we're at the start of a new taping cycle. We've got a few months to go before we get to the next Takeover, assuming there isn't another one before Wrestlemania weekend. In addition to that, we're getting something like the NXT Slammy Awards tonight with the end of the year awards. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

The announcers welcome us to the show for a change.

Here's General Manager William Regal to announce tonight's main event: a battle royal for the #1 contendership to the Women's Title. With that out of the way, Regal introduces someone who hasn't been here in a long time: Sami Zayn.

Sami thinks the fans remember him but gets cut off by OLE and WELCOME BACK chants. In case you don't know him, he's the lead singer of a band and that OLE chant is their lead single. He's also a man responsible for building NXT and making what it is today. They just sold out a UK tour but it's nice to be back home at Full Sail University. Sami is back for a reason though, and that is to become the first ever two time NXT Champion.

This brings out Samoa Joe who doesn't seem to think much of Sami's plans. Joe doesn't know why Sami thinks he deserves another shot because the last time he had a title shot, it was Joe who had to come out here and save him. Finn Balor barely survived against Joe in London so if Sami wants to keep his shoulder in one piece, he better walk away right now.

Now it's Baron Corbin interrupting to say that he actually won at Takeover. While Sami was gone, he was surpassed by someone more durable so Sami needs to go to the back of the line. Joe brings up choking Corbin out and tells Sami to mind his place in his ring. The ring is Sami's place but Corbin jumps him from behind, only to get kicked in the face and knocked to the floor. Joe backs off from Sami who is left standing alone.

Bayley says she survived against Nia Jax instead of actually winning. Tonight she's looking forward to seeing who survives in the battle royal and she might even give the winner a hug. She actually does hug Rich Brennan.

It's time for the End of the Year Award winners, announced in a video package. The trophies are golden ring bells.

Tag Team of the Year: Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady

Female Competitor of the Year: Bayley

Male Competitor of the Year: Finn Balor

NXT Takeover of the Year: Takeover: Brooklyn

Match of the Year: Bayley vs. Sasha Banks – Takeover: Brooklyn

Overall Competitor of the Year: Finn Balor

#### Tommaso Ciampa vs. Danny Burch

Ciampa takes him down by the arm to start but Burch gets up and scores with a middle rope dropkick to take over. That just ticks Ciampa off so he blasts Burch in the face with a forearm. Something like a hanging Downward Spiral off the top rope gets two for Ciampa but Burch pops him in the jaw for the same. They slug it out until Ciampa takes him down and grabs a flip over armbar (picture Becky Lynch's Disarm-Her but with Ciampa laying over Burch's back instead of sitting on the shoulder) for the tap out at 3:42.

**Rating:** C. This was a hard hitting brawl while it lasted but I'm not entirely sold on Ciampa. The armbar was a nice finisher but it seems like almost everyone is using a submission hold these days. As usual though, NXT does a great job of using jobbers to set up bigger stars, which is almost unheard of on the main roster for the last several years.

Enzo and Cass say they haven't forgotten about Dash and Dawson taking them out. The champs hid behind a woman like chicken tenders and next time business will be finished.

Billie Kay, Deonna Purrazzo and Emma all say they'll win the battle royal.

Two weeks from tonight, Sami Zayn vs. Samoa Joe vs. Baron Corbin for the #1 contendership.

#### Scott Dawson/Dash Wilder vs. Ascension

Non-title. Wilder gets in Viktor's face to start but gets pounded into the corner for his efforts. Ascension is the clear crowd favorite here

which is really strange to see. It's off to Dawson, who has a bit more luck by taking Viktor to the mat for two. The champs beat Viktor down in the corner and we hit the chinlock for a bit. Viktor fights up and catches Dawson in an STO, allowing for the hot tag off to Konnor. The flapjack drops Wilder and everything breaks down, allowing a blind tag to set up the Shatter Machine on Konnor for the pin at 4:10.

**Rating:** C+. I liked this a bit better and it's probably due to the false hope that Ascension might actually start being booked like a power team instead of the goofs they've been since their Raw debut. Or maybe it was the Shatter Machine which is a really awesome looking finisher for such a slow paced team.

Nia Jax isn't medically cleared for the battle royal. Eva Marie says she has this.

Carmella, Peyton Royce and Alexa Bliss say they'll win.

#### Elias Samson vs. Corey Hollis

Samson forearms him down to start and stomps away in the corner. A throw sends Hollis flying and Samson stop to laugh. Samson looks down at him before grabbing a hard swinging neckbreaker for the pin at 2:20.

Samson says what this place needs is what he is.

Finn Balor says the match against Samoa Joe was the most draining match of his career but he faces every challenger head to head. Now he's just going to wait to find out his next opponent. Corbin thinks he's the uncrowned champion, Sami is a friend and Joe is the one that will never go away.

Cameron, Aliyah, Asuka and Liv Morgan promise to win. Well Cameron promises to win the battle royal to become #1 contender to the Women's battle royal but you get the idea.

#### Battle Royal

Carmella, Peyton Royce, Alexa Bliss, Aliyah, Cameron, Liv Morgan, Billie Kay, Deonna Purrazzo, Emma, Eva Marie, Asuka

Eva gets right in Asuka's face to start and is quickly dropped with a shot to the face. The other nine all circle Asuka with Emma jumping her, starting everyone else into a brawl. Eva is out on the floor but not eliminated, likely to reduce her chances of severely injuring someone during the match.

We take an early break and come back with no eliminations but Cameron throws Aliyah out a few seconds later. Cameron gets rid of Purrazzo as well, followed by Morgan botching something that looked like a powerbomb. She tries it again but Bliss comes up from behind and tosses Morgan and Cameron at the same time. Emma gets Carmella in the Dilemma to send her underneath the ropes and out to the floor, meaning no elimination. Bliss chokes Emma, only to be put on the apron and punched off for an elimination.

We're down to Emma, Royce, Kay, Asuka, Eva and Carmella, with the final two on the floor. Emma has to kick away the other two Australians, only to have Asuka kick her out of the corner for an elimination. Billie and Peyton put Asuka on the apron but of course start fighting over who gets to eliminate her. Asuka puts them both on the apron and hip attacks both of them to the floor to get us down to three. Eva sneaks in and eliminates Asuka, freaking out the crowd until Carmella throws Eva out for the win at 10:45.

**Rating:** C-. These things are always hard to rate but the false finish was a nice way to tease the crowd. It says a lot that they had to have two people on the floor until the end for the double false finish. The other good thing here though is they kept Asuka safe, likely for a big showdown in Texas against Bayley.

Carmella celebrates until Bayley comes out for a hug. Asuka gives them an evil smile to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C. This show was much more about setting stuff up instead the show itself which is good long term but not the most interesting hour on its own. The triple threat in two weeks should be really good and they're already doing a good job of setting up the women's division with the new names. I mean, they're not the Four Horsewomen but at least



they're trying and should be filling things in quite well. Good enough show here but again it's about setting stuff up later on.

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