

NXT – January 21, 2015: Strike While The Crowd Is Hot

NXT

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Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Rich Brennan, Corey Graves, Jason Albert

Things are starting to pick up again in NXT with Kevin Owens making another appearance last week to lay out NXT Champion Sami Zayn after a successful title defense against Adrian Neville. These two are on a collision course and there's no way the match isn't going to be awesome. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens over the last few weeks. Neville promises revenge.

William Regal announces the next Takeover special for February 11. There will be a tournament for the #1 contendership starting tonight, as well as Charlotte defending against Sasha Banks. As usual, Regal keeps this quick as he was on screen less than a minute and announced a show, a tournament and a title match.

Opening sequence.

Sami Zayn vs. Tye Dillinger

Sami charges the ring and EXPLODES on Dillinger, knocking him to the floor before the bell rings. No match I'm assuming.

Zayn demands Owens get out here right now but he gets Regal instead. The champ says he isn't wrestling one more match unless it's against Owens so get him out here right now. Regal says he can't do that because Owens hasn't earned a title shot yet. Sami offers to make it non-title or whatever he has to do to get his hands on Owens. He won't explode out of respect for Regal, but he'll do whatever Regal asks him to get what he wants. Regal agrees and makes the showdown for Takeover.

Owens vs. Zayn at Takeover will be non-title.

Regal says Owens and Zayn will sign the contract next week.

#1 Contenders Tournament First Round: Curtis Axel vs. Finn Balor

I love how foreboding Balor's music is. Fans: "FINN'S GONNA KILL YOU!" Axel elbows him in the face to start so Balor knocks him to the floor for a big flip dive. Back in and Axel clotheslines him in the back of the head for two and nails a great looking dropkick. The fans keep it simple by telling Axel that he sucks.

We hit the chinlock before a running knee to the head gets two more. It's amazing how much easier Axel matches are to sit through when he doesn't have all the big expectations behind him. Heyman seems to have caused him more problems than good. Balor fights back up with the Pele and Sling Blade, followed by the top rope double stomp for the pin to advance at 4:55.

Rating: C-. Not much of a match here but Axel is fine for a generic heel. He has the skills to make a match work but all of the expectations put on him due to being associated with Heyman really brought him down. I liked his work in NXT (this one, not the old show) as McGillicutty and now he's just a more intense version of that character, meaning he's a lot easier to sit through. That being said, this was just a formality for Balor.

Here are the full tournament brackets.

Finn Balor

Curtis Axel

Adrian Neville

Tyson Kidd

Hideo Itami

Tyler Breeze

Baron Corbin

Bull Dempsey

Sasha Banks says Charlotte has no one to protect her tonight and it's time to win the title. She doesn't care if Devin has any more questions.

Bull Dempsey swears revenge next week.

Women's Title: Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte

They grapple to the mat to start with Charlotte getting the better of it but having to nail Becky in the face. Back in and Charlotte hammers away but Becky comes in for the DQ at 2:15. Not much of a match due to time.

Bayley comes in for the save but eventually picks up the title. Charlotte isn't cool with that and eats a Belly to Bayley. It doesn't seem like a heel turn as Bayley almost looks like she regretted it. It worked for Rick Steiner back in 1989 (albeit in a face turn) so why not here? Regal comes out and makes a fourway title match for Takeover.

Kevin Owens doesn't want to be interviewed and will say whatever he has to say to Sami's face next week.

Vaudevillains vs. Buddy Murphy/Wesley Blake

The Vaudevillains have been doing dinosaur training to make up for their recent losses, which apparently involves the Iron Sheik's Persian clubs. English misses a forearm to Murphy in the corner to start and eats a running forearm, only to take Buddy into the corner for a beating. Off to Gotch for a suplex for two and English hooks a chinlock. Murphy finally rolls over for the tag to Blake who gets a fast two off a powerslam with Gotch making the save. With the referee getting Gotch out of the ring, Murphy sneaks in a kick to the head, giving Blake the pin at 3:58.

Rating: D+. The match was nothing special but I really like the booking. Murphy and Blake have been around long enough that people are familiar with them and they've gotten close enough to picking up wins that this isn't a huge stretch. It gives the Dragons fresh challengers for the titles and keeps the cycle moving. That's one of NXT's strengths and something I really wish WWE would get better at. Keep the future challengers safe instead of squashing them, because you never know when

you might need them.

Tyler Breeze is ready to implement his plan to separate the gorgeous ones from the uggos.

Murphy and Blake say that wasn't an upset and want a title shot next week.

#1 Contenders Tournament First Round: Hideo Itami vs. Tyler Breeze

Marcus Louis is seen looking at Breeze from behind the stage during Tyler's entrance. Breeze avoids a big kick to start and wags a finger at Itami. Another kick misses and the fans call Breeze a TOTAL DIVA. Breeze suckers Itami in for a kick of his own before running into a knee to the ribs. Back up and Itami gets sent face first into the middle buckle and tossed out to the floor. A dropkick (noticing a theme here?) gets two for Breeze and a neckbreaker gets an even closer near fall as we take a break.

Back with Breeze holding a chinlock but Itami fights up with clotheslines and a tornado DDT necksnap. There's the top rope clothesline followed by a release fisherman's suplex for two on Breeze. Back up and Breeze blocks an O'Connor Roll and DRILLS Hideo with the Supermodel Kick for two.

Itami is shaken up in the corner so Breeze crawls onto his back for a kind of snap crucifix for a fall so near that the referee looked like he had to slow down for the kickout. Tyler shouts that this is about him but Itami screams at him. More kicks have Breeze rocked and the running dropkick in the corner sets up a running boot to the face for the pin at 14:24.

Rating: B-. I'm trying really hard to care about Itami and it's just not quite there. His offense has definitely gotten better but I really have no reason to care about him. There are a lot of guys who kick really hard and Itami hasn't shown he has much to differentiate himself from the pack. Breeze continues to live way beyond his gimmick and looks more and more comfortable every week.

Overall Rating: C+. This show was much more about moving things forward

than the wrestling itself. They're rushing to the next Takeover with only about six weeks since the last one, but with the main event they have set up, they would be crazy not to go with it right now. The rest of the card could be excellent with the fourway being wide open and the tournament having some potentially awesome finals. Another good show this week but in a different way.

Results

Finn Balor b. Curtis Axel – Top rope double stomp

Charlotte b. Sasha Banks via DQ when Becky Lynch interfered

Wesley Blake/Buddy Murphy b. Vaudevillains – Kick to the head

Hideo Itami b. Tyler Breeze – Running kick to the face

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