

# Smackdown – July 19, 2016: Draft Notice

## Smackdown

Date: July 19, 2016

Location: DCU Center, Worcester, Massachusetts

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, Jerry Lawler

Now this is a big one. Tonight we're not only going live but also splitting the shows into two rosters again for the first time in a few years. There's only been one other draft like this in company history and it wasn't the greatest show in the world. The interesting things here tonight are the potential returns of former stars as well as the guaranteed NXT callups. Oh and a rematch from last night's World Title match as a bonus. Let's get to it.

We open with the Commissioners and the GM's on the stage and a quick explanation of the rules:

1. Raw gets three picks to every Smackdown two.
2. Tag Teams are selected as a unit unless a GM wants either.
3. Raw has the first pick.
4. Six NXT picks will be made.

Stephanie cuts Foley off and picks Seth Rollins number one. So much for the title meaning a lot.

Daniel Bryan picks Dean Ambrose to put the Shield boys on different shows.

I won't bother saying the specifics so I'll just say which show.

Raw: Charlotte

Smackdown: AJ Styles

Raw: Finn Balor

Before we get to another pick, it's time for a match.

#### John Cena vs. Luke Gallows

The rest of the Club, Enzo and Cass are at ringside. We go to a quick commercial but this time they're showing the match during the commercial on a split screen. Gallows powers him down and is apparently too heavy to take the AA. Cena gets in a dropkick and we come back from the break. A spinning side slam gets two for Luke but he walks into the ProtoBomb and the Shuffle. Gallows breaks up the AA with a superkick (GET THAT MAN A T-SHIRT!) but the other four get in the ring and the match....is allowed to continue with Anderson and Styles being sent to the floor. An AA gives Cena the pin at 5:27.

**Rating:** C-. This didn't have time to go anywhere and I'm hoping the airing the match during the break doesn't become a regular thing. If there's one concept WWE never got, it's the idea of giving the fans a breather. You can't present every single moment as must see and expect the fans to stick with you through the insane amount of content WWE pumps out.

Time for more picks.

Raw: Roman Reigns

Smackdown: John Cena

Raw: Brock Lesnar

Smackdown: Randy Orton

Raw: New Day

#### Darren Young/Zack Ryder vs. Rusev/The Miz

Challengers vs. champions. Backlund atomic drops Miz to start and Ryder adds a slingshot elbow for two. Miz pulls Zack off the ropes for a crash before it's off to Rusev for some shots to the back. Miz gives up the hot tag to Young for his still generic offense. A quick Gut Check gets two

but Rusev suplexes Darren, only to throw Ryder into a Rough Ryder on his partner. Zack dropkicks Rusev off the apron and the crossface chickenwing makes Miz tap at 4:05.

**Rating:** C-. No time here and I have a feeling that's going to be the case for almost all matches tonight. That's how things should go though as the wrestling isn't the point here. Young making Miz tap sets up the title match just fine, though I don't see much of a reason to get hyped for Ryder vs. Rusev. Maybe it was the losing to Sheamus in two minutes flat.

#### Xavier Woods vs. Bray Wyatt

Everyone is at ringside. Bray stands in the corner with his back to Bray before bending backwards. He even kneels in the middle of the ring to offer a free shot but Woods is afraid. Woods seems to be hypnotized so Bray beats him down and chokes a bit. The release Rock Bottom plants Woods again but he makes a quick comeback, only to walk into Sister Abigail for the pin at 4:47.

**Rating:** D+. This was all about the story instead of the match and that's the right idea. Bray squashing Woods is the right idea too and it's cool to see someone freaking out at the sight and thought of Bray. That almost has to play into the finish on Sunday but it also makes the titles more interesting. If Woods is teasing a split, they'll have to drop the belts soon and that's not happening Sunday.

#### Kevin Owens vs. Kane

And never mind as Sami Zayn runs out to attack Owens. Kevin sends Sami in for a chokeslam from Kane but he chokeslams both of them for fun. No match.

Back to the picks!

Raw: Sami Zayn

Smackdown: Bray Wyatt (not the Wyatt Family)

Raw: Sasha Banks

Smackdown: Becky Lynch

Raw: Chris Jericho

### Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte/Dana Brooke

Dana starts for the team but Sasha knocks Charlotte outside and hits the double knees off the apron. Back in and Dana misses a charge to set up the Bank Statement, only to have Charlotte break it up and hit Natural Selection for the pin at 2:21.

More picks:

Raw: Rusev w/Lana

Smackdown: The Miz w/Maryse

Raw: Kevin Owens

Smackdown: Baron Corbin

Raw: Enzo Amore/Big Cass

### Chris Jericho vs. Cesaro

Cesaro uppercuts him to the floor and hits a running version up against the barricade. Back in and we hit the pinfall reversal sequence until Jericho slams him off the top. The Lionsault is countered into a Russian legsweep off the middle rope and it's time for a Swing. The spinning springboard uppercut is countered into the Codebreaker for the pin on Cesaro at 4:53.

**Rating:** C+. In case you didn't get enough of these two during the build to Money in the Bank. I'm really not wild on the idea of Jericho winning here as they don't seem interested in actually doing anything with him despite giving him a bunch of wins. Cesaro continues to be that guy who keeps losing and WWE keeps expecting him to be over, which to be fair he kind of is.

Back from a break with Becky Lynch attacking Natalya before a match. Ok then.

Draft time.

Raw: The Club

Smackdown: American Alpha

Raw: Big Show

Smackdown: Dolph Ziggler

Raw: Nia Jax

Rollins says he'll win tonight.

Time for the final five televised picks before 30 more will be made on the WWE Network.

Raw: Neville

Smackdown: Natalya

Raw: Cesaro

Smackdown: Alberto Del Rio

Raw: Sheamus

#### WWE World Title: Dean Ambrose vs. Seth Rollins

Ambrose is defending and Rollins jumps him during the big match intros. We take a break before the bell rings with Dean being posted. Back with Ambrose saying ring the bell, allowing Rollins to hammer away in a hurry. A backbreaker sets up the chinlock before Rollins sends him outside for a chop off. Dean gets whipped into the barricade but he backdrops Rollins into the timekeeper's area. Back in and Seth hits a low superkick for two as we take a break.

We come back again with what sounds like a CM Punk chant accompanying Rollins hitting a running forearm in the corner. Dean fights back with elbows to the face and a swinging neckbreaker for two. A quick Buckle Bomb sets up a missed frog splash but Rollins grabs a quick superplex. He loads up the Falcon's Arrow but Dean reverses into Dirty Deeds at 12:21.

**Rating:** C+. The match was fine but it's pure filler with Battleground and the triple threat looming. Rollins getting pinned clean is interesting as now Dean looks a lot more like an equal instead of someone who keeps getting beaten in the big matches over and over. It's a good main event, though it feels kind of worthless after last night. Like, what did any of that accomplish?

Shane and Bryan come out to celebrate and a PPV rundown ends the show.

**Overall Rating:** B-. These are the hardest shows to review as there's nothing to compare it to. They kept it moving fast enough and the wrestling was just there for the most part but they kept the draft picking moving and that's a very good thing. This felt like something professionally run and that's never really been the case in previous drafts. Good show here but this would have been better off after Battleground.

### Results

John Cena b. Luke Gallows – Attitude Adjustment

Darren Young/Zack Ryder b. Rusev/The Miz – Crossface chickenwing to Miz

Bray Wyatt b. Xavier Woods – Sister Abigail

Charlotte/Dana Brooke b. Sasha Banks – Natural Selection

Chris Jericho b. Cesaro – Codebreaker

Dean Ambrose b. Seth Rollins – Dirty Deeds

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# NXT House Show – July 15, 2016

The wife and I took in the NXT house show in Highland Heights, Kentucky (ten minutes from downtown Cincinnati) on Friday night. I had wanted to go to one of these things for a long time and was almost more excited to see this than I was for Takeover: Dallas.

The arena held roughly 10,000 people but it was cut in half and the upper deck was tarped off, leaving only a few thousand seats. The place was just over half full as the floor seats were full but only the back section (as in facing the screen) was anywhere near full. We were on the first row of our section (maybe three feet above the floor) with our tickets running about \$33 each so it's not like they were overly expensive.

Before the show we saw some WWE Top Ten videos and the fans were allowed to pick a classic NXT match with options of:

Seth Rollins vs. Jinder Mahal

Sami Zayn vs. Neville

Sasha Banks vs. Bayley

The latter won by a landslide though it was only a highlight package, which really did make sense as you don't want to get the crowd that fired up before the actual show starts.

No Way Jose vs. Hugo Knox

Knox is a very muscular British wrestler, meaning the fans were chanting

various British swear words at him. Jose is a lot of fun live and a perfect choice to open the show. He did all of his baseball slide, including running around the ring and touching all of the buckles into a dropkick. A legdrop of all things put Knox away at 8:12 for a really fun opener that did everything it was supposed to. Knox was nothing great but he would be fine as a Chris Masters type midcarder.

#### Angelo Dawkins vs. Andrade Cien Almas

Dawkins is from Cincinnati, earning himself his only reaction ever. This was the exact same problem that Almas had in the Dillinger matches: putting him in a match where there was no way he was going to be the most over guy and it really dragged things down. Almas really isn't the most exciting guy in the world though he played a subtle heel here, as was his only option. Dawkins won with a Sky High at 5:26 and they hugged after. This was nothing but the fans reacted to Dawkins for being the hometown guy.

#### Bayley vs. Billie Kay

This was a change in the card (which was shown on an old school wrestling poster which seems to be a normal thing for NXT house shows and were selling very well) as it was originally going to be Bayley/Asuka vs. Kay/Alexa Bliss. Billie did her closest thing to sexy in NXT stuff to start but Bayley laughed at her and stole some of her gear. Billie begged her not to so Bayley relented, only to point out to the crowd that Billie actually lost to Dana Brooke.

This started off as a comedy match with Bayley promising to hug her and then ambushing the referee with the hug instead. The match was your standard Bayley stuff with her having fun against the less talented Billie to start, getting beaten down and having her ribs worked over for a bit and then hitting the Bayley to Belly for the pin at 10:22. The fans LOVED Bayley and she received the pop of the night, save for maybe one name later. She's a total superstar down there though and I'm really scared that they're going to ruin her on the big shows.

#### Finn Balor vs. Bobby Roode



Roode's music is really awesome and one of the better songs they've done in a good while. Before the match, Roode called all of us fat out of shape losers and said he was going to be the new star of NXT. Even with all this stuff and insulting fans ala Ric Flair, the fans just would not hate him. Balor on the other hand was as revered as you would expect and we got a strong SEE YOU TUESDAY chant to start things off.

This was actually a pretty short match with Balor never being in any real danger. The Sling Blade and Coup de Grace finished Roode in about seven minutes and Balor took a bow before leaving. It's really clear that he's going and it's cool to see him getting a nice sendoff on the house show circuit after a great TV match.

Intermission.

Before we got back to the matches, the female host (who shared hosting duties with Tom Phillips for a very good pairing all night long) had a fan answer a question for a prize. The idea here was pretty simple: we saw a clip of something in WWE history and were given choices of what happened next. The clip was Vince walking down the hallway and getting into his car on Vince McMahon Appreciation Night and the next scene was him being blown up. One problem here: THE KID WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD!

As soon as the clip started you could hear the crowd gasping and almost panicking because an eight year old, as in someone who wasn't alive when this aired, was playing a game involving attempted murder. Oh and to make matters even better, the fourth option was "The Undertaker takes Vince McMahon to" a very dark and scary place as the host put it, thankfully censoring the actual option.

So yes, since the WWE has NO OTHER CLIPS OF ANYTHING, an eight year old played a game involving seeing Vince McMahon blown up with the other option being Undertaker taking Vince to a place that had to be censored. This was so out of place and really felt like no one actually thought about it, which isn't something you expect from NXT, or anyone with a brain for that matter.

Hideo Itami vs. Beautiful Blonde Blake

This is Blake's new gimmick but there's really nothing different about him. If he hadn't been introduced under the new name, no one would have really noticed a difference. Blake also had a generic Titantron video with his name spinning around over a blue background, which is the same thing Dawkins and Knox had. They're not much but it's better than nothing. Itami got a pretty standard WELCOME BACK chant and is basically the same as when he left.

The match was comedy to start with Blake heading outside because he didn't like all the kicks and strikes. That didn't last long though as he called himself Black Belt Blake and tried to throw some kicks with a fairly obvious result. The fans got on Blake for his tasseled boots, saying that Bayley wanted her boots back. We also got a MURPHY'S BETTER/CENA SUCKS chant for a bit of a chuckle. Itami came back with his bunch of kicks and won with the shotgun kick at 10:07. This was longer than necessary and Itami still doesn't show much fire.

#### Women's Title: Asuka vs. Alexa Bliss

Alexa had her hair pulled back here for a new look. This was actually one of the best matches of the night as Bliss has gotten way better in recent months and actually had a good match here. Asuka showed some personality here by dancing a lot when Bliss tried to get too fancy. The Asuka Lock retained the title at 12:14. This might have been the second best match of the night.

#### NXT Title: Samoa Joe vs. Shinsuke Nakamura

I'll give you two guesses who got the bigger pop than Bayley. Before the match Joe said he hated being here in Highland Heights and didn't like NXT having to lie about being in Cincinnati because that town sucks too. This wasn't going to be a title shot though because Nakamura beating Balor wasn't enough to earn himself a title shot. As he was talking, the Revival ran in for the beatdown but American Alpha came out for the save. Nakamura wanted to make it a six man against Joe and.....Nakamura to Jordan: "What their names?"

#### Revival/Samoa Joe vs. Shinsuke Nakamura/American Alpha

This was exactly what you would expect with the good guys doing a big, fast paced cleaning of the ring to start with suplexes and strikes to set up a big pose for one of the loudest reactions of the night. Gable played Ricky Morton for a bit before Jordan did the same, setting up the hot tag to Nakamura. Everything broke down and Nakamura pinned Dash with Kinshasa at 14:00. This was a lot of fun but the crowd was starting to get a bit burned out. The winners all did Nakamura's pose by the ropes to end the show.

Overall this was a very fun night with NXT knowing exactly how to give the fans a fun night. The faces won every match and you got to see every big name (Austin Aries being the biggest name missing and he's hardly a main eventer) on the roster. With cheap tickets and not a bad seat in the house, this was definitely worth going to and really well organized for a much more fun feeling than a lot of WWE house shows. Check them out if they're ever near you, in case you actually need that advice.

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## **NXT – July 13, 2016: One More**

# Match

## NXT

Date: July 13, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

It's a big show this week as we've finally reached the showdown between Finn Balor and Shinsuke Nakamura. This is another instance of NXT building up a match to be a huge deal and it's made things feel even bigger than they would have otherwise. It's likely that the winner will face Samoa Joe for the title in Brooklyn at the next Takeover. Let's get to it.

We open with a long video on Balor vs. Nakamura. They really are making this feel important.

Opening sequence.

One more thing I like that seems to be a normal thing around here: Corey Graves is introduced as a former Tag Team Champion. I know he's been around on commentary for a long time but that one line lets new viewers know he has some credibility. I'd love it if WWE acknowledged that with their announcers more often. JBL is mentioned as the longest reigning Smackdown Champion but Lawler's title reigns are almost never mentioned and he comes off as just an old guy making bad jokes instead of someone with a long history in wrestling.

Here's Samoa Joe for an opening chat. Like a lot of people tuning in tonight, he's here to see Balor vs. Nakamura. He finds it disrespectful that both of them seem to think whoever wins here will be a contender to his championship. Some people here think Balor will win and get his title back. Then some people think the King of Strong Style will overthrow the emperor. Joe (who is sweating buckets here) brought strong style to these shores though and will make the King bow. This brings out Rhyno to say he's ready to face the warrior but Joe walks away without a fight.

For next week:

Bayley vs. Nia Jax

American Alpha vs. Authors of Pain

Samoa Joe vs. Rhyno

Another Balor vs. Nakamura video with wrestlers talking about how big this is due to how big they were in Japan and how close they are in real life. HHH talks about how it would be disrespectful of either of them not to push their friend as hard as they can.

Finn Balor vs. Shinsuke Nakamura

No Demon for Balor. Actually none for Nakamura either but I thought that might be implied. Even the Big Match Intros get THIS IS AWESOME chants. They trade wristlocks to start until Balor takes it to the mat for a headlock and a BOTH THESE GUYS chant. Nakamura fights up and does the head on Balor's chest thing but Balor flips him around and gives him a Too Sweet on the head.

It's back to the headlock to keep Nakamura in check but he sends Balor to the corner. Finn jumps over the ropes to avoid a running kick but his enziguri is blocked for an enziguri from Shinsuke. Good Vibrations set up some running knees to the head and we take a break. Back with Balor getting smart by dropkicking the knee to take away Shinsuke's best weapon.

We hit a leg lock on the mat for a bit before it's time for the chops. Thankfully Balor goes right back to the knee by hanging it over the middle rope and stomping down onto it. More stomps to the knee have Nakamura screaming and it's off to another leglock. Shinsuke gets up and hits him in the ribs with the injured knee, followed by a spinning kick to the face for a breather.

The knee is suddenly fine enough for the running knee to Balor's ribs in the corner as selling isn't modern wrestling's strong suit. Balor gets in a running kick to the face though and we take another break. Back again with Balor putting on something like a shortarm scissors but on the knee, drawing even more screams before Nakamura can make it to the ropes.

Shinsuke grabs a triangle choke but Balor dives over and puts his foot on the rope for the break.

The reverse 1916 gets two and Balor is in shock. He's in so much shock that Nakamura gets in a quick Kinshasa to the back of the head for two more. Balor can't get the regular 1916 and it's time for the big slugout. Another shot to the knee has Nakamura in trouble but he kicks Finn in the head. That just earns him a Sling Blade but the Coup de Grace misses, setting up the Kinshasa for the pin at 25:14.

**Rating:** A-. This was exactly what was expected with two guys beating on each other for a long time. The knee work didn't really play into the ending but it made up the middle of the match and told a good story. As usual the winner wasn't the biggest shock but it's no real secret that Balor is probably bound for the main roster around Battleground at the latest. Above all else though, this felt like a major showdown and a passing of the torch which left Nakamura as the only logical option to face Joe in Brooklyn. Great match here and that's exactly what it was destined to be.

A lot of posing and replays takes us out.

**Overall Rating:** A+. That's really all you can give a show where they set up a match, announce two other matches that people have been waiting for and then spend half the show on a great match. If the card that is expected goes through for Brooklyn, it has the potential to be one of the best Takeovers to date, which really shouldn't be happening given how great some of them have been.

This was all about one match and that made it feel special. NXT has really grasped the concept of not not cramming too much stuff into one show, which is something so many other shows need to learn. They didn't try to put anything major other than this one match onto the show and anything else would have felt out of place here. Really good stuff and a great way for Balor to (presumably) go out.

## Results

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Finn Balor – Kinshasa

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# NXT – June 29, 2016: Compelling Wrestling Television

## NXT

Date: June 29, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

We're back to one of the things NXT does best as there's a major match in a few weeks and a few things in between to tide us over. Tonight we have Carmella vs. Alexa Bliss, which has the potential to be something interesting and then be a bigger match down the line. The tag division is heating up again as well so let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

## Carmella vs. Alexa Bliss

Bliss takes over early on with a running shoulder but Carmella snaps off

a headscissors. A bad looking snapmare puts Bliss on the floor and the fans aren't sure who to cheer for. Back in and Carmella takes her down with a headlock, only to get stomped on as we take a break.

We come back with Carmella fighting back with right hands and running clotheslines, followed by a superkick. The Bronco Buster connects but Alexa rolls out with a sunset flip for another near fall. They're not exactly lighting up the offense here. The Sparkle Splash is broken up and a Stratusphere gets two. A choke shovedown sets up the Sparkle Splash, now called Twisted Bliss, for the pin on Carmella at 13:08.

**Rating:** C. You really can see the line between the two levels of female wrestlers in NXT. Bayley, Asuka and Nia (to a lesser degree) are just on a different plain than these women, though the important thing is that these two have gotten better. The match was fine and they didn't screw up, but more importantly they have characters and there's a lot more to them than their looks. In other words, they're developing, like they're supposed to.

We see Finn Balor and Shinsuke Nakamura's initial segment from two weeks back.

Nakamura talks about traveling the roads with Balor and being very happy for him becoming an NXT star. But now Nakamura is here and he needs something to move him up to the next level. Before becoming a champion, he has to face the icons, including Finn Balor. He promises something special when they get in the ring. Nakamura's English was fine here

Bayley is ready to go after the Women's Title again but Alexa comes in and says she should get the next shot. If Bayley wants the shot, she can go through Alexa.

#### Noah Potjes vs. Andrade Cien Almas

Potjes is a somewhat creepy guy who we've seen before. Almas hits a quick dropkick to start and teases a pair of dives but stays in the ring both times, kind of annoying the crowd. Back in and Noah kicks him in the ribs and puts on a chinlock. Almas gets in some kicks of his own though and the running knees in the corner give him the pin at 2:54. Still not much



to see here.

Austin Aries doesn't like the idea that he isn't getting the respect he deserves around here. Someone like No Way Jose comes out here without ever having beaten anyone, dances a bit, and gets cheered. The fans chant Austin sucks? No, because they suck. From now on, the fans are getting what they deserve from Aries.

Balor talks about going to Japan when he was twenty four and Nakamura was the first person to really show him how things went over there. They're friends outside the ring and Balor was happy to help show him the way in this country. There's no animosity between them but now they're having to face each other. The fans are in for something special.

Bayley vs. Bliss is set for next week.

#### Tommaso Ciampa/Johnny Gargano vs. Hype Bros

Rawley sends Gargano into the corner to start and hits a three point stance tackle before bringing in Ryder, who eats a dropkick. Ciampa comes in, drawing a PSYCHO KILLER chant, and grabs a cravate. Johnny sends Ryder to the floor and hits a big old dive, only to have Rawley get in a hard clothesline as we take a break.

We come back with Rawley in control as we have dueling JOHNNY WRESTLING/HE AIN'T HYPED chants. Ryder adds a missile dropkick but Gargano breaks up the Hype Ryder. Tommaso gives Ryder a discus lariat for two but Ryder powerbombs both of them off the top. The Elbro gets two on Ciampa and Gargano's rollup gets the same on Ryder. Ciampa breaks up the Broski Boot and the running knee/kick to the head combo puts Ryder away at 11:17.

**Rating:** B. Well that was a surprise. Who knew the Hype Bros had something like that in them? Just having them as a basic power/speed team is a fine idea and I could easily see them as gatekeepers for the Tag Team Titles. Gargano and Ciampa get better every single week and I could really go for a match between the two of them and Revival.

Post match Gargano and Ciampa say they beat the Revival a few weeks back.

That sounds like they deserve a title shot but here's American Alpha to disagree. Gable says they're the former champions so if Gargano and Ciampa want a shot, it can be against them. They'll deal with the Authors of Pain later but right now it's time to take the titles back.

Cue the Revival to say they're driving the car and calling the shots. I love how Dawson holds the folded up belt in his hand. Dawson tells "Garganzalla and Chimp" that they haven't earned a shot and American Alpha are more like the betas around here. This brings out William Regal and you can feel the fans smiling. Ciampa and Gargano will be getting a title shot soon, but first of all we need to decide who the best team is around here. Therefore, next week, it's American Alpha vs. Revival in a 2/3 falls match.

Gargano/Ciampa and Alpha shake hands and the former leave but the Authors of Pain run in to beat down Alpha. Gargano and Ciampa try to make the save but get beaten down as well, leaving Alpha to come back in. Jordan gets in a suplex but the other guy takes his head off with a clothesline. Gable takes that clothesline/Russian legsweep combo (sweet goodness that's underwhelming for two guys that big) and Paul Ellering comes out to watch to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B+. The last twenty minutes, or nearly forty percent, of this show was about the tag team division and I'm more interested in that 2/3 falls match than I was for anything at the last Takeover. Above all else, the reason I love NXT so much is how they can take a story so basic (former champions want a rematch, other team that beat the champions want a shot, third team is running around attacking people) and turn it into such compelling TV.

On top of that though, the matches have been excellent with the Hype Bros getting in a good performance tonight. The rest of the show was strong as well but I was totally into that last match and the following segment. As is always the case, NXT is able to build up anything to such high levels. Bayley vs. Sasha was the top story for a long time, then it was back to the NXT Title and now it's the Tag Team Titles with Balor vs. Nakamura coming just a week after that. NXT is starting to find its groove again and that's a great thing.

## Results

Alexa Bliss b. Carmella – Twisted Bliss

Andrade Cien Almas b. Noah Potjes – Running knees in the corner

Johnny Gargano/Tommaso Ciampa b. Hype Bros – Running knee/superkick combo to Ryder

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# **NXT – June 15, 2016: The Rebuilding Phase**

## **NXT**

Date: June 15, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

It's the week after Takeover and possibly the last taping cycle before the Brand Split really screws things up. Not a lot of major changes took place last week aside from new Tag Team Champions as Revival took the belts back from American Alpha in a pretty surprising upset. Next up is Brooklyn in August so let's get to it.

We get a We Stand With Orlando graphic.

Long recap of Takeover, running the better part of four minutes.

We'll be hearing from Finn Balor and Samoa Joe later tonight.

#### Authors of Pain vs. ???/???

The Authors of Pain are the monsters who attacked American Alpha last week and have Paul Ellering (who somehow looks younger than he did when he first came to the WWF in 1992) in their corner. The announcers have no names for the jobbers, who are run over at the bell to start. To be fair they don't have individual names for the Authors either with one of them being referred to as the Tattooed One.

Some hard knee strikes have the first jobber in trouble before it's off to the other one for more of the same. The non-tattooed Author throws one jobber into the other and it's a side slam/big boot combo for one and a running clothesline/Russian legsweep combo to the second for the pin at 1:36. Total dominance, though names for the Authors would be helpful, as well as a better finisher.

Andrade Cien Almas (speaking of needing a better name) is happy with his win last week when Tye Dillinger comes in to interrupt. Dillinger: "Now listen up you six." A rematch is requested and seems to be granted.

Ellering is asked what he and the Authors are doing here but he'll only say "in due time".

#### Carmella vs. Tessa Blanchard

Carmella grabs a quick rollup for two to start and a dropkick makes things even worse for Tessa. Blanchard drops her with a forearm and asks how the fans are doin. A legsweep doesn't work though as Carmella dances away, only to get caught in an abdominal stretch. Carmella just blasts her with a right hand to the jaw, followed by a superkick to set up the Bronco Buster. A Downward Spiral into the Code of Silence (that leg crossface) is enough to put Tessa away at 2:47.

After last week's cage match, Samoa Joe says he destroyed his brother and

hunted a demon around the world to get his title. This cage match ended all the questions and officially started the reign of Joe. No one can take it from him.

Blake and Murphy say there were no problems until Murphy started causing the issues. The blame seems to go towards Alexa Bliss but they agree to get their Tag Team Titles back.

### TM61 vs. Blake and Murphy

It's now TM Six One instead of TM Sixty One. In case it's gone over your head (which was the case with most people, including me), the 61 is the international calling code for Australia. The fans want to know where Alexa is. Blake and Thorn start things off with Shane nipping up out of a wristlock before it's off to Miller for a shot to the face. A slingshot hilo gets two for Thorn and a standing moonsault/jumping fist drop combo gets the same on Murphy. TM61 is moving very quickly here and even better than they were in their debut.

Murphy comes back with a clothesline, which Graves thinks could have taken out Lord Humongous. We hit the chinlock on Thorn for a bit before it's time for the heel miscommunication as Blake clotheslines Murphy by mistake, which allows the hot tag off to Miller as everything breaks down. Murphy is sent outside and Thunder Valley (a double gorilla press slam) puts Blake away at 5:37.

**Rating:** C+. Nice match here that accomplished two goals at the same time with TM61 looking dominant over former champions and Blake and Murphy dissolving for good. I'm really not sure where they go from here but TM61 should be up for a title shot after Alpha and Gargano/Ciampa get their chances.

Revival said they told you so and now have their titles back. Dawson: "Clink me Jack!" That means bang the titles together.

The announcers talk about Bobby Roode debuting in the UK over the weekend.

We look at Bayley injuring her knee against Nia Jax.

Bayley has a doctor's appointment next week and if she's cleared there, she can get back in the ring.

### Tye Dillinger vs. Andrade Cien Almas

Takeover rematch and Dillinger is still crazy over. The fans start the dueling chants with something about one hundred and then a much louder PERFECT TEN response. Almas flips over the top rope to start and a springboard cross body sends Tye outside. Back in and Tye takes over, only to run into a dropkick to send him outside again so Almas can do his pose in the ropes as we take a break.

Back with Almas getting two off a sunset flip and slapping on an armbar. Tye gets free and they run the ropes, only to have Almas dropkick Dillinger as he tries to drop down. Dillinger gets one off a backbreaker and some crossface shots to the face have Almas in more trouble. Back up and Almas hits some forearms to the face and a spinwheel kick, followed by a dive over the top to take Ty out again. A Rey Mysterio sitout bulldog sets up the double running knees in the corner to give Almas the pin at 10:48.

**Rating:** C+. Almas looked better here but there are still a lot of things that need to be fixed with him. It's a combination of the old school vignettes not matching the character, the male stripper entrance gear, the lack of a mask and the not great in ring abilities. He's hardly horrible and is really just more bland than bad with a pretty weak finisher for a high flier. Finally, either go with Andrade Almas or Cien Almas because the three names really don't work together. It doesn't help that Dillinger is so popular right now, especially in front of the Full Sail crowd. They need to capitalize on that, especially with the recent callups.

Here's Finn Balor to address the crowd but first he has to soak up a THANK YOU FINN chant. That switches to a PLEASE DON'T GO before Finn starts talking about watching NXT in Ireland and wanting to be a part of that. He became a part of NXT but it became a part of him as well. Finn was NXT Champion for 292 days (YOU DESERVE IT) and he went to wars with Neville, Tyler Breeze, Kevin Owens and Samoa Joe. At the end of it

though, he's not the champion. Now the question is what's next for him.  
Fans: "BALOR CLUB!" Finn: "Too sweet!"

Balor asks what's next for him again....and here's Shinsuke Nakamura. They shake hands and the fans instantly think this is awesome. Nakamura says when he was in Japan, he watched Balor become the icon of NXT but now he's no longer champion. Balor is still an icon though and if Nakamura wants to be champion, he has to beat the icon. The fans lose their minds over that and start the MATCH OF THE YEAR chant. Balor says that's the answer to what's next for him so the match is on at some point in the future.

**Overall Rating:** C. You really can feel the recent callups hurting things a lot these days as the last few shows have only been decent. The Takeover special was great but there's only so much they can do aside from dream matches. Almas is really just not clicking though and they need to make some adjustments with him. To be fair though, not facing someone as hot as Dillinger would help a lot and it's not like the matches have been disasters or anything close to them.

The rest of the stories have potential but it's a bit early to see where they go. I have no idea who is next for Joe, unless Balor vs. Nakamura is on TV to set up the title match in Brooklyn. NXT has a lot of work to do but I can easily trust them to pull it off, which is a really rare thing in wrestling.

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<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01FWZZ2UA>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

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# NXT Takeover: The End: Going Out On A High Note

## NXT Takeover: The End

Date: June 8, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

We're back with a big show at Full Sail for the first time since last fall. It also might be the final show under the Takeover banner depending on which news source you believe. If nothing else it's likely to be the final match between Finn Balor and Samoa Joe for Joe's NXT Title inside a steel cage as the gimmick makes its debut in NXT. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks at the beginnings of NXT with names like Seth Rollins, Paige and the Wyatt Family. Then it was the era of Sami Zayn, Adrian Neville, Kevin Owens and Sasha Banks. However, all things that have a beginning must come to an end. We look at Samoa Joe and Asuka winning their respective titles as the old THE END IS HERE theme plays. Tonight is the end of the beginning.

### Tye Dillinger vs. Andrade Cien Almas

This is Almas' (formerly known as La Sombra in Mexico) debut. The place goes NUTS for Dillinger's count to ten entrance and you would think he was a huge star based on the reception. Almas' entrance attire is all white, including suspenders and a hat with a feather but no mask. The white comes off to reveal some blue and white tights for a pretty basic look. So he's a male stripper?

Dillinger takes him down into a sunset flip and the fans are just going nuts for him. Almas sends him outside as the fans chant BETTER THAN ONE HUNDRED (as in ten is better than Cien, which is Spanish for one hundred). A tilt-a-whirl backbreaker (very popular move these days) gets



two on Almas but he pops up to put Dillinger down.

Almas misses a moonsault as Tye rolls away, only to have Almas hit a standing moonsault for two instead. Andrade tries a headstand in the corner, only to have Dillinger superkick him down for two instead. Almas backflips into a double kick to the back before a bulldog puts Tye in the corner, setting up a double running knee in the corner for the pin at 5:18.

**Rating:** C+. This was uh....not that great. Dillinger completely stole Almas' debut here as the fans were COMPLETELY behind him and Almas didn't exactly do much to win them back. Almas was totally fine here but certainly nothing that blew me away. It's good enough but running knees in the corner isn't enough of a finisher for him and he'll need something much better.

We look back at American Alpha taking the Tag Team Titles from the Revival in a great match at Takeover: Dallas. This turned the Revival into a much more serious and aggressive team coming into the rematch here.

#### Tag Team Titles: Revival vs. American Alpha

Alpha is defending. Dawson and Gable start things off with Chad taking him to the mat but getting dropped with a shoulder block. It's quickly off to Jordan who hits that really high dropkick for two on Scott, drawing a JORDAN chant. Back in and it's a four way standoff with Alpha sending Revival at each other, only to have Dawson and Dash get behind the champs' backs for double belly to back suplexes.

Those are reversed as well and it's a double ankle lock to send Revival scurrying for the ropes. Back in and Alpha starts working on Dash's arm and the referee doesn't count a tag to Dawson. Not that it matters as the distraction lets Dash get in a cheap shot on Chad so the real tag can go through. That's fine with Gable who works on Dawson's arm, earning himself an uppercut to take it outside.

Everything breaks down again and Gable scores with a top rope double clotheslines, followed by a double dropkick to send Revival outside

again. Back in and Chad tries a flying headscissors but gets caught in a hot shot to finally change control. They be clubberin in the corner for two on Gable and it's time for an armbar. Dawson gets two off a spinebuster and it's back to Dash for the armbar sequel.

Dash loads up something on top but gets pulled down into an armbar over the ropes. The hot tag is broken up by Dawson and a Trash Compactor (I haven't seen that in years. It's kind of like a delayed spinebuster from Dash with Dawson adding a top rope legdrop.) of all things for two on Gable. Not that it matters as Gable crawls through Revival's legs and makes the hot tag off to Jordan as house is cleaned.

The spear in the corner gets two on Wilder but a sunset flip/clothesline combo gets two with Dash spearing Gable down for good measure. Jordan grabs a backslide and tags out at the same time, allowing Gable to sneak in for a German suplex with Jordan adding a dropkick for two. The fans accurately call this awesome as Chad puts Dawson in an ankle lock, only to be kicked away into an uppercut from Dawson.

That and a rollup with trunks is only good for two so Revival loads up their powerbomb/top rope clothesline combo, only to have Gable reverse it with a belly to belly ala Rick Steiner back at Wrestlemania IX. Another quick tag brings in Jordan as everything breaks down but Grand Amplitude is broken up and the Shatter Machine gives Revival the titles back at 16:00. That's the first time anyone has ever held any title twice in NXT history.

**Rating:** A. This was an amazing athletic display and I was genuinely surprised by the ending. That belly to belly to counter the clothesline was outstanding and really had me flashing back to the Steiner Brothers. Revival looked great here too and you can almost guarantee a rubber match between these two, maybe going 2/3 falls. Either that or Gargano/Ciampa get the title shot while Alpha heads up to the main roster. Whatever happens now, this was outstanding.

Alpha is getting a standing ovation when two big guys who look a lot alike hit the ring and destroy them with splashes in the corner. A swinging side slam/running boot to the head drops Gable and a Russian

legsweep/running clothesline does the same to Jordan. As they stand dominant (and receive a WHO ARE YOU) chant, Paul Ellering of all people comes out to watch. Those two would be Sunny Dhinsa and Gzim Selmani, collectively known as the Authors of Pain and normally under masks.

Asuka is warming up when Bayley comes up to look at her.

We recap Austin Aries vs. Shinsuke Nakamura, which is built around Aries wanting to prove that he really is the best in the world. Simple story and that's all it needs to be.

#### Austin Aries vs. Shinsuke Nakamura

Aries is coming in with taped up ribs. The fans are split but singing Nakamura's theme tilts it in his favor. They hit the mat to start and that's a standoff. It's back to the mat with Aries jumping out of a headscissors and both guys ducking kicks, leading to a staredown. Nakamura puts his hands on the bad ribs and tells Austin to bring it. The fans think Shinsuke is going to kill him as he starts firing off more knees to the ribs.

Nakamura does his shaky leg in the corner (Good Vibrations) but a third attempt is countered into a shinbreaker. Aries drives a knee into Nakamura's ribs but his slingshot hilo hits raised knees. For once it actually hurts the legs though and Aries kicks away at them to keep control. Off to a modified chinlock with a knee in the back as the fans sing the song again. Nakamura pops up and shrugs off the leg injuries to start firing off kicks. He really shouldn't be able to do that. A knee to the ribs in the corner has Aries in trouble but he fights out of the reverse exploder suplex.

The knees to the head can't set up the Last Chancery so Aries discus forearm him out to the floor, followed by the suicide elbow. That's only good for two back inside as this is really starting to heat up. Aries goes up top but gets pulled into a triangle choke, only to make the ropes for the break. A release gordbuster looks to set up Kinshasa but Aries counters into another shinbreaker and throws on the Last Chancery.

As usual the hold can only stay on so long so Aries hits the running

corner dropkick but he has to roll through the 450. Another running knee is blocked and Aries take him to the apron for a slugout with Nakamura scoring off an enziguri. Nakamura charges into a Death Valley Driver on the apron for a nine count but Aries screws himself over by missing a suicide dive and hitting the barricade. Back in and a middle rope Kinshasa sets up the real thing for the pin on Aries at 17:05.

**Rating:** A. The key there was Aries had Nakamura mostly beaten and then tried to go one step too far (in an effort to show how much better he was) and knocked himself out to set up the finish. It's another excellent match as Nakamura continues to be someone who can turn it up to about 17 on a scale to 10 but it wasn't quite as epic as the Zayn match. These two are both going to be fine though, especially if Nakamura learns to sell the leg injury. Aries could have done more with the ribs too but the announcers were speculating that they weren't even hurt in the first place.

We recap Asuka vs. Nia Jax, which is the basic giant vs. giant slayer story. Both of them beat Bayley up pretty badly but the question is whether Asuka's strikes can work on a monster like Jax.

#### Women's Title: Nia Jax vs. Asuka

Asuka is defending and is quickly headbutted, followed by a hair toss to send her flying across the ring. A modified Octopus Hold of all things has Nia in trouble but she reverses into a backbreaker for two. Nia rubs at the face but gets caught in a guillotine, only to reverse with a big old suplex for two. Nia has to spin out of an armbar but gets caught in most of a triangle. It's on loosely enough that Nia can lift her up for a buckle bomb to escape.

The champ's back is bent around the post as this has been mostly one sided so far. Off to a bearhug but Asuka escapes and grabs a quick kneebar. A rope is grabbed so Nia plants her with a spinebuster, only to miss a legdrop. Asuka comes back with a quick middle rope dropkick and a running hip attack for two. The powerbomb gets two on Asuka but she grabs an armbar to start a TAP chant. Nia powers out of that as well but gets kicked in the head three times in a row. A running kick/knee to the head

retains Asuka's title at 9:09.

**Rating:** B. They had a story here with Asuka just coming at Nia over and over until she finally got somewhere but they're running a bit of a risk by having Nia lose two big matches in a row. There's more than enough time for her to rebuild but you have to assume Bayley gets the next title shot, possibly setting up a triple threat for the title. Nia looked more aggressive here and that's where she needs to go, though she needs to get the title sooner than later.

Earlier today, William Regal was talking about the show when Bobby Roode walked past him. Regal immediately left to talk to him.

The cage is lowered.

We recap Finn Balor vs. Samoa Joe. Balor beat Joe twice at previous Takeovers but lost the title to him at a house show. Tonight is the final match between the two and it's being held in the first ever steel cage match in NXT history.

Neville is here.

NXT Title: Samoa Joe vs. Finn Balor

In a cage with Joe defending. Balor is the Demon again and comes out from behind a piece of cage, which he shoves over and crawls across for a really cool visual. Pinfall, submission or escape to win here. Joe goes straight for the door to start but it's barely even worth trying that early. The fans are behind Balor as he raises his boots to stop a charging Joe in the corner. A hard shot to Joe's head lets Balor try a climb but Joe quickly pulls him back to the mat.

It's time to go into the cage for the first time with Balor tasting the steel. Joe kicks him in the face but it's too early to escape. An enziguri almost lets Balor escape but a German suplex drops him for two instead. Joe chops him to make everyone go WOO but he misses a charge and gets caught between the ropes and the cage. Balor hits a string of running strikes but can't get over the top.

Instead Finn kicks him square in the jaw, only to have Joe fall on the

ropes to crotch Balor down. The Muscle Buster is countered and they strike it out to put both guys down. Back up and Balor heads for the top, only to have to come down with a Sling Blade for two. A second Sling Blade gets two more but Joe pulls him out of the corner and gets two of his own off the Muscle Buster.

Joe shouts that he's going to end Balor but Finn sends him into the cage a few times, followed by a third Sling Blade. A quick Coup de Grace gets two and Joe grabs the Koquina Clutch. Balor tries to flip out of the corner onto Joe but the hold is broken, meaning Finn has to settle for most of a standing double stomp. Balor gets his legs over the top of the cage but Joe pulls his head down and hits a middle rope Muscle Buster to retain the title at 16:07.

**Rating:** A-. I was expecting a bit more out of the finish but I'm surprised by the fact that Joe won off a clean pin. It's a huge win for him as the Demon has never been beaten before. Again you have to think that Balor is heading to the main roster now and Joe should be soon behind him, but this was all about Joe and that's a good thing for the long term future of NXT because whoever beats Joe is a huge star.

Balor has to be helped out to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** A+. When sixty percent of your show is an A- or better, I don't know how much better you can get. The only thing missing here was some of the atmosphere and energy that existed down in Dallas but that's hardly anything to take away. There were three excellent matches here that are worth checking out plus one very good and another that was just good, earning itself worst match of the night honors. This didn't have the hype coming in but it was another amazing night of NXT.

### Results

Andrade Cien Almas b. Tye Dillinger – Running double knees in the corner

Revival b. American Alpha – Shatter Machine to Jordan

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Austin Aries – Kinshasa

Asuka b. Nia Jax – Running knee to the head

Samoa Joe b. Finn Balor – Super Muscle Buster

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## **New Column: NXT Takeover: The End Preview**

Do I still need a summary for this one?

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-nxt-takeover-the-end-preview/>

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## **New Column: Breaking Up Is Hard To Do**

Looking at some of the potential perils of the new Brand Split.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-breaking-up-is-hard-to-d>

# NXT – June 1, 2016: Trending Down

## NXT

Date: June 1, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

It's one week before Takeover: Revenge/The End and the big stories are all set. Last week saw the addition of Austin Aries vs. Shinsuke Nakamura in what could be a show stealing classic to go along with the announcement of Nia Jax as the new #1 contender to the Women's Title. Expect a hard sell on the NXT Title match tonight. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's the Revival for an opening chat. They want to become the first two time NXT Tag Team Champions and they're going to hit American Alpha really hard next week. Dawson keeps talking until Tommaso Ciampa and Johnny Gargano interrupt. They want the titles too but Dawson tells them that they're just good hands.

Revival is going to take care of business but Ciampa wants to know if it's going to be like they took care of business in Dallas. That doesn't bother Revival because at least they've won something. They walk away but Gargano and Ciampa want to fight and it's a double dropkick to put Revival on the floor again.

Shinsuke Nakamura thinks Austin Aries will bow down to the king next week.

Tye Dillinger vs. Buddy Murphy



Murphy is alone here but has his first name back. Dillinger works on the arm to start and it's a standoff with Tye flashing tens. It's down to the mat with Dillinger working on the arm even more. Back up and Murphy scores with an elbow to the jaw before cranking on a chinlock. We're told that Revival vs. Gargano/Ciampa will take place tonight before Tye gets in a Thesz press of all things. A superkick sets up ten (of course) punches in the corner followed by an AA onto an exposed knee to give Dillinger the pin at 5:10.

**Rating:** C-. Dillinger has the gimmick and the in ring ability so hopefully now he's going to get some wins. I'm not sure how Blake and Murphy are going to do as singles guys but they're not the most interesting in the world. Murphy seems to have more to him than Blake but it's clear that Alexa is going to be the big star from the group.

Earlier today Corey Graves sat down with Samoa Joe and Finn Balor. Finn can't believe the loss in Massachusetts happened and his world came crumbling down. It was his job to fight every night as champion though and he was beaten on that night. Joe says he finally got the title shot he deserved after all the hoops NXT made him jump through. Finn thinks that sounds like entitlement but Joe says he was Finn's partner in the Dusty Classic.

Indeed he was but then Joe wasn't willing to give him a title shot (yeah he was) so Balor brings up all the time they've spent together over the years with Joe, including being at his wedding. Joe says he's been successful everywhere but Finn interprets this as Joe thinking he hasn't done anything. Balor says he's coming for the title and a fight almost breaks out right here before we cut away. Good stuff here but this is something NXT is just awesome at every time.

#### Elias Samson vs. Austin Aries

Aries takes him down by the arm to start and puts his knee on Samson's face while working on an armbar. A dropkick gets two and it's right back to the armbar. Samson fights up and grabs a chinlock, only to get suplexed right back down. Austin sends him outside for a suicide dive before the running dropkick sets up the Last Chancery for the submission

at 3:26.

**Rating:** C. As much as people like to think of Aries as someone with a dangerous submission move, that's the first televised submission win he's had in over three years. Leave it to NXT to set up a big submission hold for him just a week before the biggest match he's had in the company while TNA basically said one win a few years ago was close enough.

Post match Aries says he's going to put the spotlight on himself next week.

Andrade Cien Almas vignette. He'll be at Takeover.

### Revival vs. Johnny Gargano/Tommaso Ciampa

Dawson headlocks Gargano to start but takes some fast armdrags before it's off to Ciampa for a running kick to the head. Dash comes in for a slugout but gets sent to the floor. Ciampa goes after him and eats a hard clothesline as we take a break. Back with Dash working on Ciampa's leg before it's off to Dawson to stay on the injury. That lasts all of ten seconds before Ciampa breaks free and brings in Gargano for a kick to the head. Everything breaks down and it's Gargano and Dawson left in the ring. Dawson takes him up top for a superplex but Gargano locks their legs together on the landing to pin Scott at 10:29.

**Rating:** B-. I didn't like this as much as I was expecting to but the finish was a really cool surprise as Alpha now has their next challengers assuming they retain the titles next week. Gargano and Ciampa are growing on me after a slow start but it's pretty clear that Revival is on a downward swing now that they've lost the titles.

Post match Revival beats Ciampa down and load up the same move they used to hurt Big Cass' knee. American Alpha runs out for the save just in time.

It's time for the contract signing between Nia Jax and Asuka. Nia says she broke the heart of NXT and now she's going to break Asuka. She isn't scared of the champ and signs. Asuka says Nia talks too much and if she's not scared, she certainly should be. The fight is on and Nia plants her

with a powerbomb to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C. This was just ok despite being a strong go home show. You really can tell that the writer who helped cause a lot of NXT's success is gone as I can't imagine them setting up a match and then having it take place later in the night. There isn't a lot of energy going into this Takeover and a lot of that is due to it being built around rematches. There's about as much interest as you can have given that but NXT is actually trending down a bit at the moment, which you really don't see that often.

### Results

Tye Dillinger b. Buddy Murphy – Fireman's carry backbreaker

Austin Aries b. Elias Samson – Last Chancery

Johnny Gargano/Tommaso Ciampa b. Revival – Small package to Dawson

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# New Column: The Two Man

# Midcard Exodus

As promised, thoughts on Ryback and Cody Rhodes leaving. Also note that this was written before the announcement of the new Brand Split, which would change a lot of what I say in here.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-the-two-man-midcard-exodus/>