

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

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book on NXT: The Full Sail Years Volume II at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<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>

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-exod>

[us/](#)

New E-Book: NXT: The Full Sail Years Volume II

I think it's safe to say that you've heard a thing or two about NXT. Over the last few years the promotion, originally designed as little more than a dumping ground for the young talent brought into the company, has become the hottest promotion in the world. The weekly TV show has become a highlight and must see for most wrestling fans as new talent from all over the world shows up, almost making it an independent all-star promotion under the WWE banner. This isn't even starting to look at the live specials on the WWE Network.

In this book, I'll be taking a look at over one hundred and thirty NXT shows, including every live special they've aired to date. This ranges from the first live special in February 2014 with Arrival and goes all the way through Takeover: Dallas with every episode of the TV show included in between. I'll be including play by play and analysis as we take a look at what helped make NXT the hottest thing in the world of professional wrestling. Also, all of the live specials have been redone with new reviews.

The book is the longest I've ever put together at over 580 pages on a Kindle and sells for \$3.99 or the equivalent in other currencies. In case you don't have a Kindle, there are plenty of **FREE** apps you can get from Amazon for pretty much any electronic device, all of which are available at this [link](#).

You can pick up the book from Amazon [here](#).

From the UK Amazon [here](#).

From the Canadian Amazon [here](#).

Or if you're in another country with its own Amazon page, just search "NXT Full Sail II" and it should be the first thing to come up.

Also you can still get any of my previous books on the WWE Championship, the Intercontinental Championship, Monday Night Raw from 1997, 1998 and 2001, Monday Nitro from 1995-1998, In Your House, Summerslam, Starrcade, ECW Pay Per Views, Royal Rumble, Saturday Night's Main Event, the WWF and WCW pay per views from 1998, Wrestlemania and Clash of the Champions at my author's page [here](#).

I hope you like it and shoot me any questions you might have.

KB

New Column: Unlocking The Gimmick Cage

Looking at how gimmick matches can be done very, very badly.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-unlocking-the-gimmick-cage/>

NXT – May 11, 2016: This Is How They Do It

NXT

Date: May 11, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

Finn Balor is back tonight and it's already time for him to go after his NXT Title again. Balor lost the belt a few weeks back at a house show to new champion Samoa Joe, meaning Finn's target should be obvious. Other than that it's time to really hit the gas on building towards the next Takeover which is scheduled for about a month from now. Let's get to it.

We open with a video on Finn Balor, talking about how the title is his obsession before the loss to Joe. I believe this aired last week as well. Balor may have lost the title but it's time to embrace the demon inside.

Here's Finn to open things up. After a THANK YOU FINN chant, Balor thanks the fans and talks about how the matches with Joe could have gone either way but he won the first two. Before he can talk about what happened in the third match, Elias Samson comes out to sing about Balor's masquerade being exposed. Samson says Finn is nothing without the title so Balor kicks him in the head to put Elias outside. The guitar goes flying but thankfully Samson makes the save. Jeff Jarrett is somewhere groaning at the guitar not being destroyed.

Last week, Eric Young called himself a world class maniac who is so glad to finally be here in NXT.

Balor wants Samson tonight.

American Alpha vs. Corey Hollis/John Skyler

Non-title. Chad takes Skyler to the mat to start and we get the Kurt Angle themed chant. Hollis comes in and gets headlocked down as well before we hit the seated armbar. It's off to Jordan who easily throws Hollis into the air for a face first crash onto the mat. A double hiptoss puts Hollis down and there's a double dropkick for Skyler as this is completely one sided so far.

Hollis finally realizes that he can cheat and the jobbers take over on Gable for the first time. Skyler drops a knee for two and we hit the chinlock. That works for all of five seconds before it's off to Jordan as

house is cleaned. Cue the Revival on the ramp for a distraction but Grand Amplitude puts Hollis away at 5:10.

Rating: C-. This was a nearly complete squash and that's all it needed to be. Alpha is so far ahead of everyone else right now that it wouldn't make sense to have them do anything but squash other teams. Revival vs. Alpha II should be a really solid brawl though and it would help to have something like No DQ involved. A regular match would be fine too though.

Shinsuke Nakamura is asked what he thinks about Alex Riley's rage. Nakamura starts shaking, like he has rage you see.

Alex Riley vs. Shinsuke Nakamura

Riley had been calling himself the white lion down in NXT, at least until he got released a few weeks after this. Riley goes right after him to start like he's a guy about to be released going after one of the top stars in the promotion. Nakamura misses a knee though and Riley hammers away, earning himself a string of knees and forearms to the ribs and face. The running knee in the corner sets up the inverted exploder suplex, followed by Kinshasa to put Riley away at 2:38.

Austin Aries is in William Regal's office to say he wants to prove he's the best. Blake and Murphy come in to talk about being disrespected. Aries: "You don't even have the decency to bring Alexa Bliss with you?" Bliss comes in and yelling ensues so Regal makes Blake/Murphy vs. Aries/a partner of his choice next week. Aries pulls out his phone and implies he knows someone.

Alexa Bliss vs. Rachel Ellering

That would be Paul's daughter. Bliss starts on the arm by bouncing it off the mat and working on an armbar. A forearm gets two on Rachel and it's back to the armbar. The comeback goes nowhere as Bliss does the psycho eyes choke to set up the Sparkle Splash for the pin at 3:52.

Rating: D. They're doing a good job of setting up Bliss as the midcard heel though I can't imagine her ever being a real threat to someone like Asuka. Ellering was really just there and didn't show anything outside of

being competent in the ring. Then again that's been the case several times before, but she's a long way behind Tessa Blanchard in terms of potential.

Bayley says she's getting ready for her rematch when Nia Jax interrupts. She learned from the loss to Bayley but it's clear that Bayley has learned nothing from losing the title. A challenge for a rematch is issued and Bayley says she can choke Nia out again. This was a really awkward, and likely WAY too scripted, exchange.

Bayley vs. Nia is official for next week.

Finn Balor vs. Elias Samson

Just regular Finn here and his shoulder is taped up. Feeling out process to start until Balor knocks him to the floor and takes us to a break. Back with Balor holding an armbar and the fans saying it NEEDS MORE COWBELL. Samson fires off some forearms but Balor just blasts him in the face a few times. Some running chops in the corner put Samson on the floor for a baseball slide. The Sling Blade sets up 1916 for the pin on Samson at 7:47.

Rating: C-. This was fine and did exactly what it was supposed to do. In theory this sets up another Balor vs. Joe match but I'm really not needing to see them fight for a third time out of four total major matchups. This is also where Samson is a good player. He's not going to be a top heel anytime soon but those songs are enough to get the fans hating him every week and then he can take a beating and make someone else look good. That's an important role to have and Samson is as good of an option as they have for it at the moment.

Balor says he wants his rematch for the title because it belongs to him. Now he's possessed like a demon stalking his prey so here's Samoa Joe to interrupt. Before it can get physical, Regal comes out to make Balor vs. Joe III for Takeover on June 8. That's really rare for NXT as they almost never have feuds go on this long. Joe yells a lot so Balor dives over the top to take him out.

Overall Rating: C+. They're finally starting to set up some stuff for the

next Takeover, which is a good thing even though I'm not wild on the main event they're going with. However, this was a step up over last week's show and they're setting up some stuff for the future, which is where NXT shines best. Aries' partner could be interesting and you don't know what they might pull off for that.

Results

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

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Alex Riley – Kinshasa

Alexa Bliss b. Rachel Ellering – Sparkle Splash

Finn Balor b. Elias Samson – 1916

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NXT – April 27, 2016: The Superstars Formula

NXT

Date: April 27, 2016

Location: Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center, Dallas, Texas

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

It's a big night around here as we're going to take a quick field trip up to Lowell, Massachusetts where Finn Balor lost the NXT Title to Samoa Joe. We'll be looking at at least part of the match tonight, which is a really cool thing that NXT can do. When is the last time you even heard WWE reference a house show other than the European tour? Let's get to it.

We're told about the title change right off the bat. Why hide it at this point?

Asuka vs. Eva Marie

Non-title. The fans tell Eva that she can't wrestle as we hit the stall button to start. The fans are actually split on Eva as they trade headlocks and armbars. Asuka blasts Eva in the face and rolls forward for a little dancing followed by the hip attack. A Fujiwara armbar sends Eva straight to the ropes and another hip attack sends her out to the floor. Graves thinks it's starting to unravel as Nia Jax comes out to check on Eva.

Back from a break with Eva mostly missing a running boot to put Asuka down. We hit the double arm crank for a bit before a hard shot to the face keeps Asuka in trouble. Another arm crank slows things down even more until Asuka pops up with a middle rope dropkick. A second dropkick has Eva in trouble and it's time for the kicks to the chest. Eva tries to send her into the corner but eats a spinning kick to the face for the pin at 12:55.

Rating: C-. Eva was WAY better than usual here but it should be noted that she was doing very basic stuff for the most part. Still though, the fact that she didn't have a major botch is a step up and it's definitely one of her best performances yet. Also Graves deserves some credit here as he was channeling Bobby Heenan hard here by praising the heel throughout the match. That adds so much and everything worked well here.

We see some clips of Samoa Joe winning the title last week with the Muscle Buster. They only showed about thirty seconds total.

Joe says his win was inevitable and no more words are needed.

Revival vs. Matt Lee/Jeff Parker

Parker and Lee are both really skinny and I believe used to team as 3.0 in Chikara. The 3.0 on their tights would seem to support that theory. We'll say Parker is easily taken down and pounded in the corner as Lee shouts that he is respecting the rules by not interfering. Lee then starts a DEFENSE chant as Parker is dropped ribs first into Dawson's knee for two. It's off to Lee as the fans chant DEFENSE as well. The Shatter Machine puts Lee away at 3:12.

Rating: C. You could tell there was something to Lee and Parker after those chants. They were both entertaining and it was clear that they had some experience. Unfortunately they didn't have any kind of a look and are almost completely interchangeable. It was a total squash though and I could get behind the new aggressive Revival, though I don't know how much steam it would have.

Post match Dawson says they're the best and want their titles back.

Hype Bros vs. Blake and Murphy

No Alexa here so the interest is already down. The fans want to know where she is too as Mojo scares Blake into the corner to start. Mojo gets down in a three point stance and declares that neither Blake nor Murphy are in fact hyped. Ryder comes in for two off a neckbreaker and a double facebuster to take both villains down. Blake starts in on the leg before it's off to Murphy for a shot to the head. It doesn't seem to do that well though as Ryder slips over to the corner for a tag off to Mojo. House is cleaned and the Hype Ryder puts Blake away at 4:48.

Rating: D+. Nothing to see here but how far have Blake and Murphy fallen in the last few months? When you're putting over the Hype Bros, it might be time to reconsider your career choices. I don't think Rawley and Ryder are going anywhere other than a midcard tag spot and there's nothing wrong with that, at least as long as the fans still dig them.

Post match the Revival comes back out and jumps the Hype Bros.

Carmella vs. Aliyah

Aliyah was in a battle royal recently but is probably most well known from Breaking Ground. Carmella snapmares her to start but Aliyah takes over with a seated full nelson. A middle rope leg gets two and this is almost all Aliyah so far. Carmella comes back with a hurricanrana out of the corner and a Bronco Buster, followed by the leg crossface to make Aliyah tap at 3:19.

Rating: C. Aliyah was a very nice surprise here and Carmella looked fine. I know they're not exactly the new Horsewomen but it's really cool to see the division being rebuilt with a fresh cast of characters. Bliss and Blanchard looked awesome recently and these two would be a nice addition as well. Good little match here.

Elias Samson says he'll show that he's the drifter and will prove to Nakamura that he never should have drifted into NXT.

Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Elias Samson

Nakamura takes him to the ropes to start and holds Samson in place with his head. A knee drop sets up the shaky boot in the corner, only to have Elias explode out with a clothesline. Samson gets two off a suplex and we hit the chinlock. That's fine with Nakamura who kicks Samson in the head, setting up the running knee in the corner. Kinshasa puts Samson away quick at 4:24.

Rating: C. They're doing a really good job of setting up Nakamura as the new star of the roster, which is a really good idea given the possible departure of Finn Balor and having someone like Samoa Joe as champion. Samson is fine in his role and I'm kind of glad they didn't push him too hard yet as he's better as a jobber to the stars for the moment.

Overall Rating: B. I had a really good time with this show as they kept things moving all night long and got a lot of acts out there. It's going to be interesting to see where things go at the next TV tapings but leave it to NXT to figure out a way to move the top story along while still being on the Dallas tapings. They nailed this episode though, which says a lot when none of the matches amounted to anything special.

Results

Asuka b. Eva Marie – Spinning kick to the face

Revival b. Matt Lee/Jeff Parker – Shatter Machine to Lee

Hype Bros b. Blake and Murphy – Hype Ryder to Blake

Carmella b. Aliyah – Leg crossface

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Elias Samson – Kinshasa

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Samoa Joe Wins NXT Title At House Show

<http://www.wwe.com/shows/wwenxt/article/samoa-joe-wins-nxt-championship>

I did find it interesting that they mentioned the title match on last night's show but this is a big surprise. If nothing else it frees Balor up to do other things. Like debut at

Payback.

NXT – April 6, 2016: A Rare Disappointment

NXT

Date: April 6, 2016

Location: Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center, Dallas, Texas

Commentators: Corey Graves, Tom Phillips

This is the first of a series of special shows from Wrestlemania weekend with most of the matches taped from Axxess weekend. It should be interesting to see how things go with a very different style audience. Also it's not clear whether or not we'll get much advancement in the major angles as everything needs to reset after Takeover: Dallas. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Takeover as you might guess.

Phillips and Graves welcome us, clearly from Takeover.

New correspondent Catherine Kelly tells us what we can expect, including Apollo Crews vs. Elias Samson, which was a dark match at Takeover.

We see a video on American Alpha winning the Tag Team Titles, followed by Jordan (nearly in tears) and Gable talking about what it means to win the titles on the biggest weekend of the year.

Video on Asuka winning the Women's Title from Bayley.

Bayley says congratulations to Asuka and admits that Asuka is just on another level. A champion is made by how many times they get back up and get better so she'll rise to the occasion again.

We recap Elias Samson getting pinned by Johnny Gargano a few weeks back. Post match Samson beat him down until Apollo Crews made the save.

Recap video of Aries vs. Corbin.

Aries calls himself the most polarizing man in wrestling and that's just fine. He's not out there to prove anything to the people though because he's out there to prove something to himself. Talent and passion can't be measured with a ruler and a scale but he proved everything he needed to prove to Baron Corbin and isn't going anywhere soon.

We see Finn Balor retaining the NXT Title over Samoa Joe.

Balor says he escaped and survived Joe again.

Joe has nothing to say.

We see Samson singing a song to Crews but backing away from a fight.

No Way Jose is coming.

Elias Samson vs. Apollo Crews

Samson comes out with his guitar and has something to say but we have a lot of booing to get through first. The fans say that they want wrestling but thankfully Crews cuts it off to get things going. Crews throws him into the corner to start so Samson hides behind the guitar. A headlock doesn't get Elias anywhere and it's an armbar to put him on the mat. The armbar even goes to the floor so they head back inside for yet another armbar.

Back from a break with Samson getting in a shot to the back of the head and putting on a chinlock. Another chinlock doesn't go anywhere and it's Crews getting up and hammering away to a surprisingly strong reaction. Samson bails to the floor and gets taken down with an apron moonsault, only to have the standing version hit knees back inside. Elias gets in a jumping knee to the head but asks for silence, allowing Apollo to kick him in the face. The toss powerbomb puts Samson away at 14:46.

Rating: D. This really wasn't very good and that's probably it for Samson

for a little while. Crews moving to Raw is still a surprise but at least he went out on a win unlike Corbin. Unfortunately it wasn't a good match as most of it was spent on armbars and chinlocks. Samson is much more of a character than a wrestler but I'm not sure how far he can get on that alone.

Video on Zayn vs. Nakamura.

Sami can't put all of his emotions into words.

Nakamura says strong style has arrived.

Overall Rating: D+. This is a tricky one as the show should have been white hot coming off Wrestlemania weekend and the awesome Takeover but instead it's a recap and dark match. Maybe you can argue that this is a breather from all the action and a fear of burnout but I was looking forward to something entertaining here and wound up seeing a bunch of stuff all over again. It's not often that I get to say this but I was disappointed here.

Results

Apollo Crews b. Elias Samson – Toss powerbomb

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<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B01D4D3EG0>

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New Column: In Other News

Looking at some of the other WWE stories from the weekend.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-in-other-news/>

NXT Takeover: Dallas: Night of a Thousand Chants

NXT Takeover: Dallas

Date: April 1, 2016

Location: Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center, Dallas, Texas

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

We're back with another NXT pay per view style special and one heck of a stacked card. The main event here is Samoa Joe challenging NXT Champion Finn Balor in a rematch from their match of the year candidate from London. Other than that we have Sami Zayn's potential farewell match for the promotion against the debuting Shinsuke Nakamura in what should be a near classic. Let's get to it.

Of note: I was in the arena for this show so this is my second time seeing it.

Apollo Crews vs. Elias Samson was scheduled for the show but was bumped to a dark match due to time constraints. I'd assume it will air on TV at a later date.

The opening video focuses on the history of Texas wrestling before talking about how this is the future. The two title matches and Zayn vs. Nakamura receive the focus.

Tag Team Titles: American Alpha vs. Revival

Alpha (Chad Gable/Jason Jordan) is challenging. There isn't much of a story here other than Alpha has beaten all the other teams to earn a shot. Gable starts with Scott Dawson (of Dawson/Dash Wilder) and the fans do the GABLE chant in tune with Kurt Angle's old cheers. That quickly changes to "WHICH ONE'S DAWSON, WHICH ONE'S DASH", which makes sense as they're about as interchangeable as the Usos.

Gable takes him down with some headlock takeovers but Dawson keeps countering with headscissors. A rollup gets two for Chad as the sequence earns a nice round of applause. Chad gives him a gentle pat on the cheek and everything is about to break down. More armdrags have Dawson in trouble and it's off to Jordan who gets a chant of his own. The evil champs get a breather with a rake of the eyes, only to have Alpha backdrop them both as this is one sided so far.

Chad comes back in to work on the arm as things slow back down. Gable gets two off a cross body out of the corner but misses a dropkick. As usual I'm not sure why that miss hurts but the one that connected didn't. Jordan comes in for some stereo German suplexes and it feels like I'm watching the Steiners vs. the Brain Busters. To continue with that theory, Wilder comes in off a tag and gets Chad to chase him into a clothesline from Dawson to take over for the first time.

Now we get to the Revival's bread and butter of cutting the ring off and working on body parts like a good old school team would do. Dawson puts on a Gory Stretch but gets countered into a sunset flip for two. A double DDT drops the champs but Wilder crawls under the ring and nails Jordan to break up the hot tag. That hooligan.

In the (unfortunately) memorable part of the match, Dash loads up a powerbomb for a clothesline from Dawson but can't keep Gable up, basically making it a slow motion Dominator with the clothesline missing completely. It's only two though as Wilder isn't legal, meaning it's back to Dawson as the fans chant BOTCHAMANIA and remind the champs that they screwed up.

Chad FINALLY crawls through Dawson's legs and makes the white hot tag to Jordan for some serious house cleaning. A string of suplexes gets two on

the champs but Scott gets a quick rollup for two with Wilder using a towel to hold his partner's feet on the ropes like a classic heel. I'd love to see more of that kind of stuff. An uppercut gets two on Jordan with Gable making the diving save for a SWEET false finish.

Jason misses a charge into the corner but Gable makes a blind tag to come in. Some rollups are exchanged for two and Gable gets some more near falls off a small package and a reverse victory roll. Jordan makes a blind tag of his own and runs around the ring to sneak in and spear the heck out of Wilder, setting up Grand Amplitude for the pin and the titles 15:11.

Rating: B+. What a match and it really did feel like the Steiner Brothers vs. the Anderson and Blanchard. That's the kind of a pairing you never expect to see again in this generation but these two really did get close to pulling it off. Like so much in NXT, the Revival was talented but just ran into a team more evolved than they were. Alpha is one of the most polished acts I've ever seen given how long they've been together. I know Gable gets the hype (as he should) but Jordan is an amazing talent in his own right with some amazing athleticism and technical abilities.

Jim Ross and Michelle Beadle are shown.

Kota Ibushi is here for a BIG reaction from the crowd.

Ad for the NXT UK tour.

We recap Austin Aries vs. Baron Corbin, which is all about Aries debuting and getting attacked by Corbin, who was mad over losing the #1 contenders triple threat match. Aries is out for revenge.

Austin Aries vs. Baron Corbin

Corbin whips him into the corner to start but gets forearmed in the head a few times for his efforts. A discus forearm puts Corbin on the floor and Aries nails a top rope ax handle for good measure. The announcers talk about Aries breaking up a 600+ day Samoa Joe title reign, which is as close as you'll get to an acknowledgment of Ring of Honor around here.

Back in and Corbin finally realizes he's a lot stronger than Aries and

shoves him down to the mat. A whip sends Aries shoulder first into the post for two and things slow way down. We hit the nerve hold with Corbin shouting that Aries is a little man from nowhere. Not quite the Great Gatsby but close enough. Corbin lets go of the hold and gets two before telling the timekeeper to ring the bell. There's something awesome about someone who just yells at everyone else because he knows no one can touch him.

Aries comes back with some left hands and a neckbreaker across the middle rope for a cool spot. A missile dropkick followed by a running corner dropkick put Corbin on the floor for a suicide dive, which of course draws an NXT chant. Aries tries another charge but runs into Deep Six on the floor for a huge crash. For some reason the referee counts one twice so Aries dives back in at eleven. It must be getting the leftover Ring of Honor out of him. Back in and Aries says bring it so Corbin tries End of Days, only to have Austin roll over into a cradle for the pin at 10:43.

Rating: C. I really don't like this ending and the match felt a bit off. Aries didn't get in a ton of offense and then he wins on a quick rollup. I'd assume this was designed to set up a rematch but it's really not the best debut. The idea made enough sense but it's not the version I would have gone with. You can have Corbin take a loss here and not really have it damage him as he can just lay people out to make up for it later. I don't hate this but it didn't do much for me.

Balor arrived earlier in a Star Wars shirt.

We recap Sami Zayn vs. Shinsuke Nakamura. There's nothing personal here but Zayn made his debut with a big win over Cesaro years ago so now Nakamura wants to win a big match in his own debut. It's pretty clear that Sami is heading for the main roster after this one so they're likely going for a big moment here. We also get a video on Nakamura, whose introduction was basically "Yeah you all know him and you know he's awesome.". Why go with anything other than the obvious?

Scott Hall and X-Pac are here.

Sami Zayn vs. Shinsuke Nakamura

The fans sing along with Sami's music for a cool moment. As big as Sami's pop is though, Nakamura's chant and reaction are just that much bigger. The place seemed to be in awe of him and his spastic dancing, even doing their holy swearing chants during the entrances. They circle each other a bit and the fans chant YES in advance of contact. Sami ducks the kick to the head but Nakamura tells him to bring it.

Back up and Sami cranks on the arm as the fans are totally split. Now we get my new favorite NXT chant of "BOTH THESE GUYS!" That's quite the compliment and not something you often hear. As we hear about Nakamura's Kinshasa knee (Daniel Bryan's running knee), Sami starts throwing him around with armdrags before telling Nakamura to bring it in a nice touch. More knees to the ribs put Sami down and we get a SHINSUKE'S GONNA KILL YOU chant.

There's the first kick to the head and a second gets a one count. Nakamura puts on a front facelock as the director tells Graves to talk. Sami gets in a suplex for two and a big forearm puts Nakamura on the floor. That's not good for Sami as Nakamura gets in two straight knees to the head, followed by a running knee to the ribs for two back inside. Sami is smart enough to make Nakamura miss a charge out to the floor, setting up the big flip dive. The fans again declare this awesome as Sami catches a charge with a Michinoku Driver to put both guys down.

Then in the sequence of the match they slug it out with forearms for at least thirty seconds, drawing a YES chant until it turns into trading forearm bombs. Nakamura's nose is busted and they start speeding up again to a round of applause. Nakamura gets the better of it with knees to the ribs and a flurry of kicks/stomps to the head to put Sami down. Both guys are gassed though so Sami takes Nakamura's head off with a clothesline.

That just earns Zayn a cross armbreaker which is turned into a triangle but Sami stands up and kicks him in the face for the break. When all else fails, KICK HIM IN THE FACE! Now it's Sami kicking Nakamura down against the ropes, followed by the Koji Clutch in the middle of the ring. Shinsuke turns it into a rollup for two and followed with a quick enziguri. Fans: "FIGHT FOREVER!"

The Helluva Kick misses but so does the Kinshasa, allowing Sami to grab the Blue Thunder Bomb for an awesome near fall. Nakamura rolls to the floor but still gets up a HARD kick to block Sami's diving DDT. Back in again and Sami tries the exploder, only to have Nakamura elbow the heck out of the back of his head. A middle rope knee to the head sets up the Kinshasa for the pin on Sami at 20:07.

Rating: A+. And that's your match of the show, weekend and year so far. Just a brutal, brutal fight with two guys hitting each other as hard as they could for twenty minutes until one of them couldn't get up anymore. Nakamura looks like a killer on arrival and Zayn gets to move on to the main roster with a classic on the way out. What more can you possibly ask for out of two guys in a match like this? Outstanding stuff and one of the hardest hitting matches I've seen in a very long time.

Nakamura takes a bow but helps Sami up to chants of "THANK YOU SAMI!" Zayn raises Shinsuke's hand before staying in the ring for a bit in what looks like his goodbye as his music plays one more time. We get one final OLE chant as Sami waves goodbye and looks back. The camera work here makes it much more effective on the broadcast than it was in the arena.

We recap Bayley vs. Asuka. Again it's similar to the Tag Team Title match as Asuka has run through the division and only the champ is left. Simple but effective.

Stephanie McMahon is shown and described as an integral part of the women's division. I'm to the point where I don't even care about this anymore. Stephanie has decided that she invented the division and set it up so that's the official company line now. Moving on.

Women's Title: Asuka vs. Bayley

Bayley is defending and both women get enormous reactions. Asuka's entrance sees cherry blossoms fall from the ceiling, which were just bags being emptied out by production staff who could be seen in the rafters. The fans argue over whether Bayley is going to hug Asuka or if Asuka is going to kill Bayley. Feeling out process to start until Bayley eats a right hand to the face to knock her into the corner.

They hit the ropes but miss some running strikes to give us a standoff. The running hip attack puts Bayley down though and the champ is suddenly in trouble. A second hip attack misses though and Bayley gets in a middle rope elbow for two. Asuka can't quite get a Fujiwara armbar as Bayley makes the rope so it's off to some kicks to the ribs instead. A quick hurricanrana sets up Bayley's guillotine choke but Asuka escapes and puts on an ankle lock.

That's reversed as well and Bayley starts forearming her, only to have Asuka scream and dropkick the champ again. Now it's time for some YES kicks, followed by a running knee for two more. Asuka kicks her in the head again as this is getting a little more brutal. Back up and they both try dropkicks, followed by Bayley blocking another dropkick and grabbing a legbar of all things. Asuka gets up so Bayley elbows her in the leg before busting out a dragon screw leg whip.

A quick cross armbreaker has Bayley in trouble and a seated armbar makes it even worse. That's countered into a rollup (because of course) for two but Asuka can't get her namesake lock. Fans: "BOTH THESE WOMEN!" Bayley's armbar doesn't work and unfortunately the Bayley to Belly doesn't either, allowing Asuka to get in a snap belly to belly. The Asuka Lock goes on and Bayley is in trouble, eventually falling down and fighting for a LONG time before passing out in the hold to give Asuka the title at 15:24.

Rating: B. The ending felt a little flat here but that's up from feeling very flat live. The match worked and you could get a much better story with the camera showing Bayley getting more and more desperate as she just didn't have what it took to hang with someone as skilled and seasoned as Asuka. They did a good job of protecting Bayley by having her pass out, but I still don't think Asuka did enough on the arm to set up that hold. The ending makes sense in theory but I still don't like the execution. It's still a good match though.

Post match Asuka looks at the fallen Bayley (now awake and sitting up) but walks away without a handshake or any kind of sportsmanship.

We recap Samoa Joe vs. Finn Balor. Joe already lost to Balor in their first title match back in London but went on to win a VERY long match

over Sami Zayn to earn this spot. Since then, Joe has gone on a mini rampage (as is his custom) to set this up.

Bobby Roode is shown in the front row. Now that's a big deal. Well kind of. As big a deal as a TNA guy can really be.

NXT Title: Samoa Joe vs. Finn Balor

Balor, in full demon mode, is defending...and he has a chainsaw. It never ceases to amaze me how he goes from a normal looking guy in a leather jacket to whatever insane monster this is supposed to be (It's awesome but where in the world does this come from?). They slug it out to start with Balor being sent outside, only to come back with right hands to bust Joe WAY open. You really couldn't see the severity of the cut live but there's quite a bit of blood coming down his eye.

Joe throws Balor hard over the barricade so the doctor can look at his eye but then throws the towel away. In an amazing visual, the camera cuts to the barricade where the demon face rises up like he's on an elevator and springboards off the barricade with a forearm. The referee brings the towel in again but Joe throws it away and smacks Balor in the face.

Balor does that hop over the ropes out of the corner (that's always sweet) but Joe knocks him off the apron for one of the hardest suicide elbows I've ever seen. Oh wait though as we have to check the cut again, though to be fair half of Joe's face is bloody here. Again, that wasn't clear from the audience, who swear at the medical staff for not letting them fight. The announcers suggest that the match could be stopped but they finally get the cut closed (as well as they could at least) so Joe can Rock Bottom Balor out of the corner.

The enziguri gets two on the champ and they stop it AGAIN for the cut. That earns them an F*** PG chant, followed by the Facewash to Balor in the corner. A running big boot and knee drop get two but Balor dropkicks him down. That means it's time for another medical check and a LET JOE BLEED chant. The champ fires off some chops to send Joe outside, followed by a HARD running kick to the chest.

The Sling Blade connects but Balor misses a dropkick, allowing Joe to hit

the backslash for two. Joe stays on him with the powerbomb into the sequence of submissions, capped off by a Crossface. This caused a Benoit chant in the upper deck which was immediately booed out of the building. So even NXT fans have standards.

The Muscle Buster only gets two and Balor wins another slugout with something like a Pele and it's time for demon mode. The dropkick sets up the Coup de Grace but 1916 is countered into the Clutch, only to have Balor climb the buckles and flip back onto Joe for the pin to retain at 16:22. Joe's stunned look is great as he has no idea what happened to him.

Rating: A-. This felt much more like a fight than a match and that's exactly what it needed to feel like. I know a lot of people are going to complain about the referee stoppages but that's the wrestling world we live in now. I really don't have an issue with someone having a bloody eye getting treatment before the cut gets out of hand. Yes it got annoying but after seeing how bad it really was, I more than understand it now.

What I'm not sure of is who the next challenger is going to be. There's no logical reason to do Balor vs. Joe 3 and the only other option would seem to be Nakamura, though it's a bit too soon for that. At least we had a really good match here, though it was a step down from their London match.

Joe stares at Balor to end the show.

Overall Rating: A. The show was better on a second viewing but it wasn't a classic by any stretch. I didn't feel much of a flow here as it's really just a collection of matches. That being said, it's a collection of REALLY good matches with the Nakamura vs. Zayn match more than stealing the show. Other than that you have a great opener, an awesome main event and a totally watchable Aries vs. Corbin match that doesn't even last eleven minutes as the worst match of the night. This is what NXT does: set up matches and then blow the doors off when it's time for the show. Great stuff here and an amazing start to the weekend.

Results

American Alpha b. Revival – Grand Amplitude to Dawson

Austin Aries b. Baron Corbin – Rollup

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Sami Zayn – Kinshasa

Asuka b. Bayley – Asuka Lock

Finn Balor b. Samoa Joe – Balor flipped back onto Joe while in the
Koquina Clutch

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