

Beast in the East: The Land of the Wrong Main Event

Beast in the East

Date: July 4, 2015

Location: Ryugoku Sumo Hall, Tokyo, Japan

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton

This is one of those times where the WWE Network shows how amazing it really is. Instead of a pay per view or TV show, they've basically sent cameras to film a major house show and we get to watch it because we're lucky that we have the Network in our lives. The main draw is of course Brock Lesnar in a rare match as he faces Kofi Kingston in what could be a lot of fun. Let's get to it.

The opening video talks about the only two things that matter: Finn Balor vs. Kevin Owens and Brock Lesnar. Does anything else matter?

It's a really basic set with a short aisle and a square Titantron. I like that.

Neville vs. Chris Jericho

That's quite the opener. The fans are mainly behind Jericho but the LET'S GO NEVILLE chants sneak in there. Feeling out process to start with Jericho working on a wristlock but getting sent out to the floor for his efforts. Back in and we hit a bow and arrow hold on Neville, only to have him flip over into a cover for two.

They're working a nice technical style to start here. Cole talks about their histories and my mind is blown as we hear about Dragon Gate and FMW on WWE programming. Back up and Neville tries some flips, only to be sent out to the floor. The springboard dropkick puts him down again and the fans are eating up some Canadian hero.

We hit the chinlock back inside as Jericho is working a very simple heel style while still being a face for the crowd. An enziguiri gets two on

Neville. Cole: "And now Neville may be the one heading back to the locker room." So is Jericho just going to stand out there if he wins? It's not the worst idea in the world but as usual, Cole doesn't think before he speaks. Neville fights back up and goes to the top but Jericho is right there waiting to knock him down. Very nicely done there as you can see the story they're telling here.

Jericho's superplex is countered but he has to roll through a Red Arrow attempt. A try at a hurricanrana goes even worse as Jericho counters into the Walls for a very solid reaction from the crowd. The ropes are quickly grabbed though and Neville hits a quick dropkick and standing shooting star for two. Jericho forearm him down and hits the Lionsault for the same. The Codebreaker connects but Jericho takes his time covering so we keep going. Neville pops back up with the delayed German and a superkick but the Red Arrow hits knees, setting up the Liontamer (yes Liontamer) for the submission at 16:13.

Rating: B. Huh? They spent the entire match setting up Neville's big comeback to beat Jericho and then they have him win? I'm not sure on that one but at least Neville looked great in there. I was really digging the story they were going with here Jericho being one step ahead of Neville and cutting him off at every turn while treating him as someone beneath him with all of his cockiness. Good match with a questionable result but the fans dug the heck out of the Liontamer so points for giving them something to cheer for. Jericho was the heel here, but it was very basic at best.

Brock is here.

Divas Title: Nikki Bella vs. Tamina vs. Paige

Nikki is defending and it could be interesting to hear how the fans treat this one. Cole, ever the genius, calls the former Women's Champion Bull Nakana (it's Nakano, as Byron Saxton corrects him. Yes, Byron Saxton is the smart one on this team). Paige takes over to start but actually works with Nikki to suplex Tamina. You know, because Tamina is so big that you can't suplex her.

Nikki takes over as you can hear some very loud spots being called. The

champ loads up a superplex but the referee is nice enough to tell Tamina to get back in so she can do the Tower of Doom. Tamina gets sent outside again though because she really has no reason to be here other than likely taking the fall later. The Rampaige gets two on Nikki because she killed that move during one of their title matches. It's Tamina in again though with a superkick to Paige but Nikki rolls away from the Superfly Splash, setting up the forearm to retain at 7:13.

Rating: C-. This was fine and basically a Raw Divas match. Nikki is pretty clearly getting the Divas Title record because it's going to make us forget about AJ Lee or something like that, because only WWE really cares about these things. You can see the other Divas having to take it back a notch to let her keep up, but Nikki is a lot better than she used to be.

Brock Lesnar video, which might as well be Kofi's last rites.

Kofi Kingston vs. Brock Lesnar

Just Kofi here and surprisingly no Heyman. For some reason I don't see him as being a big deal in Japan. Kofi is smart enough to bail to the floor to start and we're told that New Day's tag match took place before the show went on the air. I was wondering how they were going to be able to fit the whole seven match card in two hours, but did anyone really need to see New Day vs. Lucha Dragons? Cole mentions Brock being the IWGP Heavyweight Champion, which is always interesting to hear in WWE.

The chase is on for a few seconds but the inevitable beating quickly begins. Kofi's cross body works as well as you would expect it to work and a dropkick to the back just annoys Brock even more. Kofi flips out of a German and goes after the knee for as much effect as it's going to have. There's the first German though and the Japanese fans chant SUPLEX CITY. German #2 makes Kofi's hair bounce in a good bit. The fans try to cheer for Kingston so Brock just destroys him with the F5 for the pin at 2:58. This was exactly what it should have been.

Brock throws in a few more Germans because he can, followed by some F5's to an invading New Day. Again, this is exactly what it should have been.

In case you're wondering about the other two advertised matches, Cesaro beat Diego by submission and the Lucha Dragons pinned the New Day in dark matches.

Quick recap of the NXT Title match, which should be main eventing but instead we're getting a lame tag match because that's how WWE works. Anyway, Finn Balor made his name in Japan and is coming back home as the Demon to take the title from NXT Champion Kevin Owens. Kevin simply said it's not going to happen.

NXT Title: Finn Balor vs. Kevin Owens

We get the Demon entrance and oh yes it's still glorious. For a bonus, the camera changes to an arena shot at the crescendos of the music. To make it feel even more special, we get the full on flower presentation from geisha girls (Owens throws his into the crowd of course) and streamers for both guys. Get this through your head ROH: doing the same thing for every match doesn't make it feel more special. Hideo Itami is shown in the front row and we're ready to start. Balor has more paint than ever with his face, torso and left leg covered.

Balor charges at the bell and loads up the Coup de Grace in the first ten seconds. Owens rolls outside so Balor nails a big dive as the NXT chants start up. He tries to bail again and eats a baseball slide as Balor is all over him. Back in and Owens hammers away to take over for the first time. Owens: "AND THAT'S WHY I'M THE CHAMP!" We hear more of Balor's accomplishments in New Japan as Owens takes some bows.

It's off to Chinlock City before a forearm breaks up Balor's springboard. The slow pace is working for Kevin here and it fits him very well. Finn beats the count back in but takes the backplash for two. Back in and Owens snapmares him down and runs the ropes...before stopping for a chinlock. Owens: "Are you not impressed? I don't care. I hate this country and all its stupid people!" Balor fights back again with a middle rope forearm for two so Owens does Cena's finishing sequence, complete with an attempted AA.

Balor is afraid of a lawsuit over gimmick infringement (only Kurt Angle can steal that many finishers) and slips out twice in a row. Bloody

Sunday is teased (and the fans gasp) but it's a Pele Kick to put Owens down instead. Owens takes a big flip dive and a top rope double stomp to the back, followed by a reverse Bloody Sunday (not called that of course) for a VERY close two. The Coup de Grace misses though and Owens' Cannonball gets two. The package piledriver slam gets the same but Balor hits a quick Sling Blade.

Another Coup de Grace is countered so Balor kicks him in the head and FINALLY connects with the stomp....for two. Dang I thought that was it. Owens can't hit the swinging fisherman's superplex so he settles for a middle rope Regal Roll for two. That looked great. Kevin's Swanton hits knees and the real Bloody Sunday gets an even closer two. They're trading bombs here and it's getting awesome. Owens makes the eternal mistake of slapping a hero in the face and saying the hero can't beat him. Balor dropkicks him into the corner, hits a running corner dropkick and a second Coup de Grace for the title at 19:30.

Rating: B+. Was there ever any doubt that this was going to be awesome? Owens is one of the best heels that I've seen in years and he does everything he can do to make you hate him. The fact that he can go as well as he does in the ring makes him even better, which is saying quite a bit as he's that good as a character.

Tatsumi Fujinami comes in to congratulate the new champion. Owens of course refuses a handshake because he's a true heel.

Kane/King Barrett vs. John Cena/Dolph Ziggler

Here's a match that no one wants to see because it's lame even by house show standards and WWE didn't think this stuff through. And Lana isn't even here, though to be fair she wouldn't make sense out there with Cena. Ziggler shoulders Barrett down to start so it's off to the power guys, meaning Kane gets to bore main event crowds in a new country. Cole: "Cena has restored credibility to what many would admit was a rather stagnant United States Title." Oh yeah Vince isn't listening.

Cena slugs away at Kane for no effect, just as he's done about 194 times over the years. Maybe if we're lucky Kane will break a hole in the ring and be a demon/monster again. Barrett chinlocks Cena before it's back to

Kane, who bores the announcers so much that they start name dropping Japanese wrestlers and co-promoted shows. Cole: "It's amazing to know that COO HHH is watching this show live." No Cole, it isn't.

Barrett comes back in for some big right hands as the announcers keep trying to find ANYTHING to talk about here. Another Barrett chinlock slows things down even more but Cena comes back with an AA to a very limited reaction. Kane breaks up the tag but can't hit a chokeslam, so Cena, ever the genius, tries an AA. Since it's against Kane though, the powers of history and Cena's strength don't work because Cena can usually do that on Henry and Big Show but can't handle the 100lb lighter man.

ANOTHER chinlock makes the match drag on even further but Barrett misses an elbow to finally allow Ziggler to get the hot tag. Dolph cleans house....and gets taken down again so this match can keep going for reasons I do not understand. Just let Cena AA Barrett for the pin already. We hit the double arm stretch on Dolph before Winds of Changes is countered into a crucifix for two. The FIFTH chinlock of this match is followed by Barrett's apron knees and yet another chinlock.

Winds of Change stops Ziggler again and Kane does the old Arn Anderson drop down onto the back until he crotches himself. Now usually that would mean a hot tag, but why do that when you can have Kane hit a big boot and a double back elbow from the heels to keep this going? The chokeslam is countered and Ziggler finally hits the jumping DDT for the hot tag. Cena AA's Kane with ease (because this match has erased the last ten minutes from history) and hits another on Barrett for the pin at a mind numbing 23:52.

Rating: D. The match wasn't even horrible but you could have cut out at least ten minutes of this and done the exact same match. Rusev would have made a lot more sense than Barrett but for some reason they didn't change this match to ANYTHING else. The time was the real problem here as it went on forever and the chinlocks killed any interest there might have been here.

A big celebration ends the show. Cole: "You and I actually trended on Twitter tonight!" Is there really any other way to end this? Thankfully

the last shot of the show is Balor holding up the title.

Overall Rating: B. Here's the thing: this show had two goals to take care of: Brock Lesnar being all destructive and a good NXT Title match with Balor getting the belt. They nailed those two things to near perfection, so anything else was a bonus. Luckily there was a good opener and a fine Divas match, but that main event killed a lot of the energy the show had. They really should have aired one of the other matches in its place, because that was the completely wrong choice to end the show. This should have ended with Balor pinning Owens, not a lame tag match. Still though, really fun stuff for a glorified house show.

Results

Chris Jericho b. Neville – Red Arrow

Nikki Bella b. Paige and Tamina – Forearm to Tamina

Brock Lesnar b. Kofi Kingston – F5

Finn Balor b. Kevin Owens – Coup de Grace

John Cena/Dolph Ziggler b. Kane/King Barrett – AA to Barrett

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Wrestling Wars Podcast

Episode 16

I'm back....eventually. I join NorCal about ten minutes in to talk about TNA's latest woes, ROH, the Beast in the East and Battleground. Plus Dimension X.

<http://mightynorcal.podbean.com/e/wwp-16-we-start-off-with-a-solo-effort-that-turns-into-a-kb-run-in-we-cover-beast-in-the-east-battleground-mock-tna-even-a-roh-segment/>

NXT – June 24, 2015: In Which Mojo Rawley And Sami Zayn Sit On A Couch

NXT

Date: June 24, 2015

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Byron Saxton, Rich Brennan, Corey Graves

We're getting closer to the big July 4th showdown for the title and that means Finn Balor needs to rack up a few wins. Up first we have the second half of the big sitdown interview with Balor, which is likely focusing on his time in New Japan Pro Wrestling. Other than that we might get some fallout from Joe vs. Owens from last week. Let's get to it.

We open with the roster on the stage and HHH talking about the loss of Dusty Rhodes. Dusty was family to everyone on this stage because he

thought they were his kids. HHH, barely able to keep his voice together, asks for a moment of silence as the bell rings ten times.

Opening sequence.

Here's Hideo Itami for his first comments since being injured. He acknowledges that he'll be out another 3-4 months due to his shoulder injury but promises to come back and win the NXT Title. This brings out Kevin Owens, who is glad Itami will be in Japan for the July 4 show, but it's cute to hear Itami imply that Owens won't be leaving Japan as NXT Champion. Owens slips up on the word delusional but makes up for it by saying he sounds like Itami trying to speak English.

However, there are two things Kevin wants to make clear. First of all, he didn't hurt Itami because if he did, there's no chance Itami would be standing there. The other reason is because Owens wants an apology for Itami implying that Owens attacked him. Itami calls him a terrible human being, so Owens thinks that if he's going to be accused of hurting Itami, he might as well do it. Kevin comes to the ring but Balor comes out for the save, only to have Rhyno jump Balor and knock him off the stage.

Balor vs. Rhyno later tonight.

Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady vs. Jason Jordan/Sylvester LeFort

The entrance sounds a bit faster this week but Enzo makes up for it by saying he sees two mushrooms from Mario's world in the ring: they're about to get flattened. Cassady's part didn't sound very smooth but he got the lines out well enough. I had been wondering what happened to LeFort. Colin puts Sylvester down to start and slams Enzo down on top of him for two, only to have Jordan tag himself in and catch Enzo in a slam. LeFort's cobra clutch doesn't get him very far so it's quickly off to Jordan, who gets rolled up for the pin at 2:32.

After last week's main event, Joe talks about hearing the people chant LET THEM FIGHT. He got the fight he wanted but he didn't get the fight he wanted (not a typo) because Owens is still walking. Joe wants Owens again.

Dana Brooke vs. Cassie

Brooke has Emma in her corner and Cassie is K.C. Cassidy. A quick rollup gets two on Brooke and a headscissors puts her down again. That's enough for Dana as she throws Cassie down and gets two off a slam. Dana cranks on an arm and leg at the same time while advising Cassie to tap. Cassie comes back with something like a Thesz press and some clotheslines but Dana Whiplashes her off the top for the pin at 3:36.

Rating: D+. This wasn't quite a squash as Cassie got to show some spunk, which means she'll probably be pushed as something more serious when she gets some more ring time. Brooke is still definitely a work in progress, but if there's one thing NXT has shown it can do, it's take their girls and improve improve them about ten fold overnight.

Charlotte isn't worried about Dana.

It's time for part two of Balor's sitdown interview, which starts with some clips of Sami Zayn hanging out at his house. Balor likes to put jigsaw puzzles together (amen brother) and still plays with Legos while watching old pay per views. Suddenly I'm digging the heck out of this guy.

NXT head trainer Matt Bloom (actually called that here instead of Jason Albert) talks about meeting Fergal Devitt in Japan about eight years ago. We get some pictures of them hanging out over the years, including Bloom pulling Devitt's pants down as they posed for a picture. Bloom explains the concept of a young boy and we see some stills and videos of Fergal's time in new Japan. Prince Devitt was someone obsessed with trying to master the Japanese style and he felt more like Prince than Fergal over there.

Then WWE came calling right around the annual Tokyo Dome show and Fergal wasn't sure if he could do it or not. He had to try though because there was nothing left for him to prove in Japan so here he is, with Sami Zayn and Mojo Rawley sitting on his couch in the background. He calls it an incredible journey but it's still continuing. Next week: the NXT days.

Bull Dempsey has been trying to get in better shape without much success.

This is shown through a series of Instagram shots of Dempsey falling asleep while trying to train. So he's narcoleptic instead of just fat?

Hype Bros vs. Sawyer Fulton/Angelo Dawkins

That would of course be Rawley and Zack Ryder. You know what? Why not? It's not like Ryder has ANYTHING better to do. Mojo runs Dawkins over to start and it's off to Ryder for a nice dropkick to Fulton. Back to Rawley for HAMMER TIME, allowing the amateur guys to take over with the old Benjamin jumping over Haas' back onto Mojo's back spot. A backdrop ends Angelo's offense and it's off to Ryder for all his usual stuff. The Broski Boot gets two and everything breaks down. Rawley holds Dawkins up for a middle rope Rough Ryder and the pin at 4:00.

Rating: C-. Ryder and Rawley have a weird chemistry together and I've always been a fan of Zack so it's cool to see him do something other than losing to Rusev in 45 seconds. Fulton, Dawkins and Jordan seem like the perfect choice for a stable along with Chad Gable but for some reason the Shoot Nation stable was called off. They're still fine for roles like this though and you can easily rally them together later.

Eva Marie wants a match but Regal needs proof that she has more than charm.

Finn Balor vs. Rhyno

Kevin Owens comes out and shoves Byron away from his chair to do commentary. Balor takes it to Rhyno to start and slugs him down in the corner. Rhyno gets sent out to the floor as Owens denies attacking Itami again. A big flip dive puts Rhyno down again and gets two back inside. Owens promises to win on July 4, even though he doesn't know what it is. "I'm Canadian so it doesn't mean anything to me. Independence Day? Will Smith? Good movie."

Rhyno gets in his first offense with a spinebuster and puts on a bearhug. Owens has completely taken over commentary by ripping on Brennan, because Kevin doesn't believe that Brennan has talked to anyone on the roster. "I've seen them running away from you." Owens now has his arm around Saxton and has pulled Byron's head onto his shoulder. We take a break and

come back with Balor fighting out of a second bearhug.

Owens is annoyed at all the questions Brennan is asking him as Balor gets two off a dropkick to the side of the head. That earns him a northern lights suplex but Balor staggers him with a Pele Kick. The Coup de Grace is loaded up but Owens comes down for a distraction, allowing Rhyno to hit the belly to belly. The Gore is countered by a kick to the face though and the Sling Blade sets up the Coup de Grace for the pin at 11:40.

Rating: C+. This was fine. The idea behind Rhyno is that he's intense enough to lose every big match he's in, beat some jobbers, and then come back for another loss to make someone look good. There's awesome value in that and it's something you can never have enough of. Balor vs. Owens is going to be awesome, especially if the demon shows up.

Owens comes in and double teams Balor until Samoa Joe comes in for the save, likely setting up a tag match next week.

Overall Rating: C. Not their best show this week but they did a good job of setting up Balor vs. Owens in less than two weeks. Other than that they have enough feuds and stories going on to set up a big non-Takeover show before we get to the REALLY big stuff down the line. Good effort this week, even though it was mainly a placeholder outside of the main story.

Results

Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady b. Jason Jordan/Sylvester LeFort – Rollup to Jordan

Dana Brooke b. Cassie – Whiplash

Hype Bros b. Sawyer Fulton/Angelo Dawkins – Middle rope Rough Ryder to Dawkins

Finn Balor b. Rhyno – Coup de Grace

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NXT – June 17, 2015: Who Is Fergal Devitt?

NXT

Date: June 17, 2015

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Corey Graves, Byron Saxton, Rich Brennan

It's a big week here in NXT as last week saw Samoa Joe challenging Kevin Owens to a title shot but getting turned down because he hasn't racked up enough wins yet. Fair point said Commissioner William Regal, so it's a non-title match tonight instead. This is probably just filler until we get to July 4 in Japan but NXT filler is still good stuff. Let's get to it.

As you would expect, this show is dedicated to the American Dream Dusty Rhodes.

We open with the Dusty tribute video, which is still awesome stuff.

Opening sequence.

Blake/Murphy/Alexa Bliss vs. Carmella/Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady

Enzo's speech this week is about Star Wars but he keeps it short. Carmella wants a piece of Alexa Bliss, and Cass is nice enough to spell out the one word that describes Blake, Murphy and Bliss. There's a new ring announcer who sounds like he has no idea who any of these people are. He has a good, deep voice though. The fans think Blake and Murphy look stupid but switch to BONA FIDE STUD/CERTIFIED G.

Blake and his headlock slow Enzo down to start before a shoulder puts him on the mat. With nothing else working, Enzo opts to dance and hits a very unique cross body where he doesn't actually jump but takes Blake down anyway. Everything breaks down and the Long Island guys (and Carmella) clean house.

Back from a break with Enzo slugging Blake down but getting dropped from behind by Murphy. We hit the headlock on the mat for a good while before Cass gets dropped off the apron. Enzo avoids a charge in the corner though and makes the tag off to Carmella, meaning Alexa has to come in. Carmella dominates in a hurry as everything breaks down again. Cass plants Blake with the side slam, setting up the Rocket Launcher for the pin at 10:22.

Rating: C-. This was fine, but there's a major point that caught my eye here. Since turning heel, Alexa has been wearing more revealing attire and Carmella was wearing even less than usual tonight. However, other than Enzo calling Carmella hot during the entrance, their looks or attire are never addressed. The lack of comments from Lawler or the girls ripping on each other for their appearances and just fighting because they hate each other. I love that about NXT and it continues to show how lame and behind the times the Divas division really is.

Stills of Cena vs. Owens II and the aftermath.

Joe is here to deal with Kevin Owens but more than that he's here because he wants to wrestle in places that are cutting edge. That explains the departure from TNA as I doubt they could even cut paper. As for Owens, his running away last week told Joe that he didn't want to fight. Tonight though, the NXT World Champion (that's a new one) is getting what he deserves.

We get the first part of a look at Finn Balor, mainly due to a sitdown interview. First question: who is Fergal Devitt? Balor talks about growing up in Ireland and how his dad built his way up from a cleaner to a train engineer in a cool story. One day a show called Superstars came on his TV and he was instantly hooked. We get some really cool clips of him in some tiny independents as well as Insane Championship Wrestling (Scotland) and Revolution Pro Wrestling UK.

Becky Lynch cries talking about how Fergal (her word) opened a wrestling school in Ireland and got her into the business as a result. She lied about her age to get into the school and so that Fergal might ask her out, which apparently he did. There are some really cool pictures of the two of them going through school and starting their careers, including stuff like being in the ring or just listening to music together so you could tell they were close.

There are clips from Insane Championship Wrestling with him in the demon paint where the announcers praise him for being amazing. Next up was New Japan but he said he's be back to Ireland. This was about eight minutes long and totally awesome as it made me care about Balor more than I even have before. Part two is next week.

Charlotte vs. K.C. Cassidy

A headscissors takes Cassidy down to start but she comes back with a quick rollup for two. That goes nowhere as Charlotte kicks her in the face and chokes with the boot when asking the referee about the speed of the count. Charlotte's cravate doesn't work very well as K.C. comes back with a cross body for two, only to have her eat a spear (good selling too). The Figure Eight makes Cassidy tap at 3:50.

Rating: D+. Just a squash here to remind us that Charlotte is awesome before she gets back into it with Barrett and Emma for the big feud. That spear looked good and could be a good power finisher for her as Charlotte is tall and strong enough to make it work well. Cassidy has potential but is clearly not that experienced.

Dana Brooke says she's misunderstood because she's a current fitness competitor who isn't scared one of Charlotte. She's replacing Charlotte

because she's the total diva and not using her family name to get into NXT. I have no idea what Carmella was looking at that was just a foot or so off camera but it made her look really weird. She makes up for it just a bit by coming back to pat Devon on the head.

Kevin Owens vs. Samoa Joe

Non-title. The crowd going silent when Joe's music changes tells you all you need to know about how horrible it really is. Owens bails to the floor to start but Joe goes right after him and gets in the champ's face. Back in and the fans already think this is awesome. Not so fast kids. Owens: "THE CHAMP IS HERE!" That earns him a right hand to the face and a big chop to the head as Joe gets in the first offense.

A back elbow drops Kevin again as the fans are quieter than you would expect. The corner enziguri sets up the Facewash and the big running boot to the face to send Owens outside for a break. Back with Joe missing a charge in the corner, allowing Owens to hit a Cannonball, almost out of desperation. A chinlock keeps Joe in trouble and the second version slows things down even more. Fans: "HEADLOCK CITY!" It's a chinlock but points for creativity.

The hold is finally broken and Joe drops his own backplash for two. Something like a running enziguri gets the same on the champ but he fights out of the Muscle Buster. They fight to the floor but Owens can't powerbomb the baron of the buffet. The referee gets shoved down and that's a DQ at 14:39.

Rating: C-. This was more of an angle than a match but that chinlock in the middle killed everything they had going. I have a feeling they'll move on to Balor vs. Owens for now before Joe gets his big title match, or maybe just a non-title match against Owens instead. Fun power brawl while it lasted, but that chinlock went on way too long. It was much more of a preview than a showdown.

They do the big brawl with security not being able to hold them back post match. Owens shouts that the champ is here to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. It was another of those setting the future shows,

which are often some of the best episodes NXT puts out. The Tag Team Title rematch is set, Charlotte looked dominant and Brooke is ready to fight her, there's a reason for Joe vs. Owens II and you top it off with the really awesome Balor video. That's quite an impressive use of 53 minutes as you have four stories set up, which could cover a month of upcoming TV. It's back to efficient for NXT and that's what they do best.

Results

Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady/Carmella b. Blake/Murphy/Alexa Bliss – Rocket Launcher to Blake

Charlotte b. K.C. Cassidy – Figure Eight

Kevin Owens vs. Samoa Joe went to a double DQ when they both shoved the referee

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NXT – June 3, 2015: Recharging

NXT

Date: June 3, 2015

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Rich Brennan, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

This is an interesting time for NXT as one of their biggest stories isn't taking place on NXT. Instead, NXT Champion Kevin Owens has been called up to the main roster and even defeated John Cena clean on pay per view in his debut match. It doesn't help that he's feuding with a bunch of people here in NXT as well. Let's get to it.

The opening video is all about Owens beating Cena at Elimination Chamber.

General Manager William Regal has an announcement tonight.

Tyler Breeze vs. Adam Rose

Fans: "WE WANT KRUGER!" Rose takes him into the corner to start and nails some loud chops, followed by a headlock takeover: rest hold. Back up and Breeze nails a great dropkick to put Rose on the floor. That goes nowhere as Rose backdrops him to the floor and we take a break.

Back with Rose putting on a sleeper for a good while until Breeze fights out and kicks him in the chest. Breeze, wrestling like a face here, nails some running forearms in the corner but gets caught in a spinebuster, which Rose transitions into a Boston crab for a nice spot. Breeze crawls over to the ropes and comes back with the Beauty Shot for the pin at 12:01.

Rating: C+. Breeze is one of those characters who is going to be turned face just due to how well he works in the ring and there isn't much NXT can do to stop it. This was a much better match than I was expecting, especially considering Rose is way past his expiration date at this point.

Solomon Crowe is glad Joe was there last week and promises to be back and better than ever.

Dana Brooke has been at the Arnold Classic and will be back soon.

Eva Marie is brought to the stage for a chat and MY GOODNESS the fans do not want to see her. The YOU CAN'T WRESTLE chants stop her cold but she

says she'll wait. Eva was at Takeover to watch the great women's wrestling and that's why she's here now. She wants to compete with the best and they're right here in NXT. I know she's been training more, but she has a huge hill to overcome to get anywhere.

Regal's announcement is that on the big 4th of July show with Brock Lesnar in action, Balor will challenge Kevin Owens for the NXT Title in Japan, and it will air live on the WWE Network. Oh man that could be awesome if they air the whole show but it sounds like just the NXT Title match.

Carmella vs. Alexa Bliss

Carmella goes right at her with three straight takedowns and right hands every time. Bliss manages to drop her face first onto the buckle for two before cranking on a cravate. Back up and Carmella hits some running forearms, only to get caught in a rollup with a hand grabbing the ropes to give Bliss the pin at 3:34.

Rating: D+. This is where NXT's logical booking shines. It's clear that they're setting up a six person tag and what better way to set it up than to have the girls getting there for a bit? Bliss has transitioned into this new role perfectly and the character change is so jarring that it works very well.

Rhyno says he's back to go after the top contender in Finn Balor. Tonight he's a Gore away from being one step closer to being NXT Champion.

Video on Sami Zayn's shoulder surgery, which fixed a torn rotator cuff.

Vaudevillains vs. Jason Jordan/Marcus Louis

I had been wondering what happened to Louis. The crazy Louis starts with Gotch as the fans are very happy to have the Vaudevillains back. It's quickly off to English for a manly knee to the ribs (Fans: "THAT WAS MANLY!") but Jordan comes in for a suplex to take over. We hit the reverse chinlock on English to slow things down. Louis tags himself in, much to Jordan's annoyance, and puts on a chinlock of his own. English fights up and makes the hot tag to Gotch for a quick Whirling Dervish and

the pin on Marcus at 5:16.

Rating: D+. So the Vaudevillains seem to be faces as well. That's not the worst idea in the world as you can put them against Blake and Murphy when Enzo and Cass are done with them. That's one of the places where NXT shines: they set something up for when the current feud is done and they can transition right into the new feud. I miss that kind of well done and planned out booking. The match was nothing special and was mostly spent in a chinlock. I'm assuming Jordan will go partner hunting for the next few weeks.

Video on Sasha Banks being all Bossy.

Finn Balor is ready for Rhyno.

Finn Balor vs. Rhyno

Feeling out process to start until Rhyno just runs Balor over with a shoulder. Rhyno goes up top but gets kicked out to the floor as we take an early break. Back with Rhyno putting on a body scissors to slow Balor down. Rhyno mocks Balor's signature pose before putting on a chinlock.

That goes nowhere as Finn comes back with a middle rope forearm but the reverse lifting DDT is countered into a spinebuster for two. Frustration is setting in for Rhyno and the Pele makes it even worse. The Sling Blade connects but the Coup de Grace misses. The Gore misses as well though and Balor grabs a quick rollup for the surprise pin at 12:10.

Rating: C+. I liked this better than I was expecting to with Balor being able to adapt to Rhyno's simple yet effective power style. That's the perk of having someone like Rhyno around: he can work well with anyone and you can easily build him back up by having him squash jobbers, only to lose again to someone like Balor. Nice little match here.

Rhyno Gores Balor on the stage to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. This show would best be summed up as recharging. You have the Vaudevillains returning and Breeze acting more like a face, along with setting up some feuds for the future. This is something you come to expect from NXT as they hit Takeover, have a week off, and then

start getting back on track to the middle of the road feuds. Owens vs. Balor in Tokyo should be awesome and the fans are going to eat it up.

Results

Tyler Breeze b. Adam Rose – Beauty Shot

Alexa Bliss b. Carmella – Rollup while holding the ropes

Vaudevillains b. Jason Jordan/Marcus Louis – Whirling Dervish to Louis

Finn Balor b. Rhyno – Rollup

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NXT Takeover: Unstoppable: Joe Is Gonna De-But! Joe Is Gonna De-But!

NXT Takeover: Unstoppable

Date: May 20, 2015

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Rich Brennan, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves

It's another live two hour special with a rare rematch for the main event. Tonight it's Zayn vs. Owens II as Sami tries to get the NXT Title back from the man who beat him by referee stoppage back at Takeover: Rival. These shows are always worth checking out and there's no reason to think this won't be the same so let's get to it.

The opening video features a bunch of fans talking about why they love NXT and thanking the promotion for giving them wrestling back. It transitions into a regular opening video with clips of every match and soundbytes from the wrestlers.

Four models, wearing fur and talking pictures of themselves, walk the aisle like a runway and I think you know where this is going.

Tyler Breeze vs. Finn Balor

This was supposed to be a triple threat but we get a clip of Hideo Itami being attacked in the parking lot as he arrived. Kevin Owens is there and says that's a shame. THANK YOU! This is one of those things you never get anymore in wrestling and it drives me crazy. Itami is injured, so why not give Owens (or anyone) credit for it instead of just saying "yeah he's hurt. Too bad." It's so nice to see. It's also nice to see the full on Irish demon entrance for Balor again, complete with dreadlocks, paint, the dragon style cape and spikes down his back. He even has a huge yellow eye on his back.

Feeling out process to start with Breeze looking disturbed (rightfully so) by Balor's appearance. Tyler finally nails a big kick to put Balor on the floor before choking with the boot in the corner. We hit the chinlock on Balor and Tyler seems to have his own group of fans tonight. Balor rolls up and tries a sunset flip but rolls through into a basement dropkick. Another dropkick to the side of the head sends Breeze outside and Balor hits a running double stomp to the back from the apron.

Back in and Balor kicks him in the head for two more. The Sling Blade gets the same but Breeze stops a charge with a Supermodel Kick for a very close two. Tyler unhooks a buckle pad but misses the Beauty Shot. Balor misses a double stomp and gets rolled up for two before being sent into the exposed buckle, setting up a Beauty Shot for two.

Balor rolls outside and walks a bit (Fans to the referee: "YOU'RE NOT COUNTING!") before surprising Breeze with a running forearm. Finn goes up to the bottom of the Titantron (Fans: "PLEASE DON'T DIE!") for a big dive to take Breeze down again. Back in and the Coup de Grace makes Balor #1 contender at 11:05.

Rating: B. Great choice for an opener here and Breeze continues his hot streak. Balor was just too much for him here though and that's the right thought process. It's hard to go with Breeze, who has gone from a comedy character to a serious wrestler, over someone who is one of the best packages in all of NXT. Balor vs. Zayn or Owens should rock the house too.

Owens watches from the back.

Someone from Game of Thrones and Stephanie McMahon are in the front row.

Clips of the northeast tour.

Dana Brooke/Emma vs. Bayley/Charlotte

That place is going to erupt when Bayley finally wins the title. Bayley catapults Dana into a clothesline from Charlotte to start and chases Emma to the floor. Emma hides behind her partner on the floor but eats a dropkick from around the corner. Back in and Emma gets in a blind shot to take over on Bayley, setting up a neck crank. The Emma Sandwich gets two and Emma mocks the Bayley high five. That earns her a suplex and it's off to Charlotte who comes in with a double DDT. Emma's cross body is countered into the Figure Eight but Dana makes a save, only to walk into the Belly to Bayley. Natural Selection ends Emma at 6:38.

Rating: C+. This was fine but a bit short. It's a good move to not have Brooke take the fall as they're probably setting her up for something bigger down the line. Bayley not getting the pin keeps Bayley vs. Emma ready for later on and hopefully then on to the title pursuit again. Nice little match here but the time hurt it.

We look at Sami injuring his shoulder on Raw a few weeks back. I'm still not sure how legit that injury is and I love that I can't tell.

Some NXT rookies are here, headlined by the still yet to be named Uhaa Nation.

Baron Corbin vs. Rhyno

Just a power brawl here. Rhyno looks almost the same as he did back in ECW. Baron gets sidestepped and clotheslined to the floor to start and Corbin is in early trouble. Back in and Corbin knocks him off the top and out to the floor as the fans think Cor-Bin Sucks. Rhyno tries to fight back but gets thrown into the corner and stomped down until the referee pulls him off. We hit the chinlock and the fans aren't sure who they like more. Rhyno fights up and wins a slugout but Baron headbutts out of a belly to belly. Instead it's a spinebuster for two on Corbin but he blocks a Gore with a clothesline, setting up End of Days for the pin at 7:13.

Rating: C. Take two guys, let them beat each other up for seven minutes, soak in the cheers. There isn't much more to this one than that as Rhyno was brought in exactly for this purpose: make other people look good and do the job at the end, because he's an established veteran who is going to bounce back from whatever losses he has. Good power match.

We look at Owens beating up Cena on Raw.

Owens is asked about his busy week, which he breaks down in detail. The NXT Title is a real prize, unlike the US Title. He has a bit of veteran advice for Sami: don't show up tonight, because it's the last time anyone will ever see (insert You Can't See Me) him.

Tag Team Titles: Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady vs. Blake/Murphy

Enzo and Cass are challenging with Carmella in their corner, who may or may not have turned on them. Enzo says Team Cottonelle is taking an L tonight because there's a bounty on their head. In a nice touch, Cass spells out the word and we cut to a SAWFT sign in the crowd with the camera panning over each letter in time.

Enzo takes Blake (with his hair in ponytails) down to start and it's off to Big Cass, sending the champs hiding in the corner. Murphy's chop has

no effect on Cass so he throws Murphy hard into the corner for two. Enzo adds a high cross body for the same but the champs cheat a bit to take over, setting up Murphy for a backbreaker. Enzo gets stomped down in the corner and caught in a powerbomb into a Codebreaker for two more.

Back to Murphy for a superplex but Amore fights him off and hits a tornado DDT to set up the double tag. Cass cleans house and gets two off the Empire Elbow before tagging a very banged up Enzo for the Rocket Launcher. Cue Alexa Bliss to jump Carmella, drawing Cass out before he can throw his partner. Bliss crotches Enzo to give Blake the pin to retain at 8:48.

Rating: C. Nice swerve here as Bliss going after Carmella was teased a bit last week but it wasn't enough to make you think it was going to happen. People were waiting on Carmella to turn and then you get a nice surprise instead. Enzo and Cass probably aren't taking the titles anytime soon and it might be time to send them to the main roster.

Eva Marie is here and is met with indifference.

We look back at Sasha Banks vs. Becky Lynch. Banks took Lynch under her wing and used her to retain the title. Becky shook her off and has become #1 contender, saying it's her time to prove that her career has all been worth it by becoming Women's Champion.

Women's Title: Becky Lynch vs. Sasha Banks

Becky is challenging and sporting a new look with orange hair, a black coat, goggles and shorts. The ring gear is similar to Lita's look when she returned from her broken neck. Becky cranks on the arm to start and trips Sasha down into a rollup for two. We hit a pinfall reversal sequence for some near falls each until Sasha bails from an armbar attempt. Sasha crawls away from a stomp on the apron and twists Becky's arm into a faceplant on the apron. Fans: "LIKE A BOSS! LIKE A BOSS!"

Now it's Sasha going for the arm and posing on the apron to mock Lynch's entrance. We hit the chinlock from the champ before she switches to a double arm choke with her foot in Becky's back. Sasha's double stomp in the corner lands on the arm for two and Banks steps on the arm, bending

it all the way back to the mat with her boot on the wrist. Off to a short arm scissors for a bit before Becky rolls over and does her Backlund/Bulldog lift into a slam to break the hold.

Becky makes the one armed comeback and gets two off a missile dropkick but Banks goes back to the arm for two. Sasha goes for the arm again but they both wind up on the floor. It's Becky going after the arm this time before throwing it back inside for a suplex onto the arm. An armbar with the feet has Banks in trouble and another suplex gets two. Fans: "SUPLEX CITY!"

Sasha flips out of a pumphandle suplex but gets pulled down into the seated armbar, sending her crawling to the ropes for the break. Becky gets kicked out to the floor again for a suicide dive but Lynch catches her (mostly) on the fly and drives the champ into the steps. Back in and Becky gets knocked off the top, setting up the Bank Statement (with an additional arm trap) for the tap out at 15:30.

Rating: A-. I know I say this every time, but I can't remember the last time I was this into a women's match or most matches for that matter. These two were beating the tar out of each other with the arm work going back and forth making for a great story throughout. These girls somehow get better and better every single time and they're stealing all of the Takeovers. Great match.

Becky gets a standing ovation.

We recap Owens vs. Zayn. They were friends for years but Owens attacked Zayn after Sami won the title at Takeover: R-Evolution. Owens said he wanted to provide a better life for his family but has been using that as an excuse to be an evil jerk. He beat Zayn for the title last time but now Sami is coming in with a bad shoulder.

NXT Title: Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens

Sami is challenging. Owens comes out wearing a John Cena The Champ Is Here shirt. After the Big Match Intros, Owens bails to the floor as is his custom. Sami gets tired of waiting and goes after him by sending Owens into the steps and hammering away. He throws Owens into the

barricade before they spill into the crowd. Owens tries a powerbomb on the concrete but Sami grabs a barricade to escape.

Sami knocks him onto the concrete to take over again and they head inside with the Blue Thunder Bomb connecting for two. The half nelson/chicken wing suplex gets the same and Sami loads up a tornado DDT, only to have Owens block it with a raised knee to the back for a unique counter. The Cannonball misses though and the t-bone into the corner rocks Owens again. He's able to roll away from the Helluva Kick though and it's back to the floor. Another exploder suplex staggers Owens but he catches a running boot and powerbombs Sami onto the apron.

Cue the referees to check on Sami but Owens keeps hammering away. Owens stomps away as the fans want to let them fight. Kevin throws Sami against the steps and punches him down again as the doctor keeps trying to check on him. They actually get back in the ring and I'm not sure if this match is still going.

GM William Regal comes out and calls Owens off, eventually ripping at Owens' face, earning Regal a headbutt. Kevin gets the title and a chair (the same weapon that started their feud in ROH) but we've got music. Cue SAMOA JOE (with that name on his shirt and called that name by Brennan) and the fans are stunned. Joe gets right in Owens' face and the champ runs. We'll call the match a no contest at about 12:00.

Rating: B+. Heck of a fight while it lasted but that's twice in a row now that Owens has knocked Zayn out to beat him. It's one heck of a rub for Owens and the beauty of it is that Zayn is going to be right back on top through pure charisma. Joe vs. Owens is going to be a war and that's quite the way to have him debut, even if it was spoiled.

Owens comes back out but says he's done his job to end the show.

Overall Rating: B+. Somehow, this is a downgrade over their previous shows. Really fun show this time with the girls making up for the angle disguised as a main event. Joe debuting is a great moment as he's such a huge name on the indy scene that the NXT fans are going to accept him with open arms. This was another great Takeover and the future continues to shine so brightly for this company's future.

Results

Finn Balor b. Tyler Breeze – Coup de Grace

Charlotte/Bayley b. Dana Brooke/Emma – Natural Selection to Emma

Baron Corbin b. Rhyno – End of Days

Blake/Murphy b. Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady – Blake pinned Amore after Bliss crotched him on the top rope

Sasha Banks b. Becky Lynch – Bank Statement

Kevin Owens vs. Sami Zayn went to a no contest

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NXT – May 13, 2015: Building In Reverse

NXT

Date: May 13, 2015

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Rich Brennan, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves

It's the go home show for Unstoppable, but it's been clear that one of the only things that can stop NXT is the injury bug. Sami Zayn and Hideo Itami have jacked up their shoulders. Sami's time on the shelf (if he'll be out at all) has yet to be determined but Itami is looking at six to eight months. It's going to be interesting to see how the Takeover card changes as a result of the injuries. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of Sami Zayn answering John Cena's Open Challenge for the US Title. Sami is still going to be here tonight to go face to face with Owens, but this was taped before the injury.

Opening sequence.

Solomon Crowe vs. Baron Corbin

Crowe goes right after him to start but gets shoved across the ring. Baron slowly hammers him down and the fans chant either BORING or CORBIN. It turns into BARON'S GONNA BORE YOU but Solomon kicks him into the corner. I'm digging this spunky fighter character but I still want the hacker gimmick instead. Not that it matters as Crowe charges into the End of Days for the pin at 2:07.

Post match Rhyno comes out to start the brawl until security breaks it up. Well it's better than Bull Dempsey. Rhyno Gores down some of the guards.

Finn Balor says he isn't underestimating Tyler Breeze because he knows how awesome Breeze is. As for who he'd rather face for the title, Sami is one of the best in the world but he's still bothered that he didn't beat Owens. Either is fine with him though.

Tyler Breeze says he's winning the triple threat and getting back where he belongs. He doesn't care who he faces for the title.

Sasha Banks vs. ???

Before the match, Sasha says she made Becky Lynch and next week she'll prove that she's the Boss. A small package and backslide get two each for the unnamed one (the fans dub her Black Shorts) and Banks bails to the floor. Back in and a cross body gets two on Sasha. I love how the

announcers manage to avoid saying they have no idea what the other girl's name is. Sasha drives two knees into the ribs in the corner and Black Shorts is in trouble. The Bank Statement is good for the submission at 2:31.

Charlotte and Bayley want a tag match with Emma and Dana Brooke at Takeover. Nothing wrong with combining feuds into one match.

We get the same Uhaa Nation vignette from last week.

Nation comes in and sees....someone I don't recognize but it might have been Crowe. They seem friendly. Nation still doesn't have a name.

Alexa Bliss vs. Carmella

Feeling out process to start with Bliss grabbing some rollups for two each. Carmella takes her down into a body scissors but here come the Tag Team Champions. Bliss gets caught in a full nelson with Carmella's legs as the fans tell the champs that they look stupid. We get an awkward sequence of Bliss wrist dragging Carmella off the top but pausing once she hits the mat. She pops up into a standing moonsault but it's called double knees to the ribs. Carmella grabs her headscissors crossface but Blake and Murphy distract her, allowing Bliss to slam her down and hit the Sparkle Splash for the in at 3:40.

Rating: D+. This was missing most of the time as Bliss looked a few steps off. Then again it could have been Carmella not being in place for the spots. Not that it matters though as Bliss could have been any given girl out there as this was all about Carmella, who now seems to be against the champs. Granted that's changed almost every week so it shouldn't be a surprise.

Murphy and Blake get in the ring and the fans chant NO MEANS NO. Carmella says her boys will be here next week and prove that Blake and Murphy are SAWFT. The fans were actually behind here here.

Itami says he wants to fight Owens after he wins the triple threat to beat some respect into Kevin.

Emma and Dana Brooke are on for the tag match. They leave but Brooke

comes back to pat Devin on the head.

Hideo Itami/Finn Balor vs. Tyler Breeze/Adam Rose

No Rosebuds this week. Remember that Itami accidentally kicks Balor in the face last week during his match with Breeze. Balor does an extended entrance (no paint) and the fans think it's awesome. Itami chops Rose to start and brings Balor in for a slingshot stomp to the chest and two. A big clothesline puts Rose on the floor and we take a break. Back with Balor dropkicking Adam for two before Breeze comes in and takes over. It's Balor in trouble in the corner as Rose and Breeze start taking turns stomping on Finn.

Breeze stays in for a chinlock before Rose gets two off a spinebuster, which transitions into a Boston crab. When is the last time anyone not named Jericho used that move? A rope is grabbed so Rose switches over to a sleeper. Balor finally jawbreaks his way to freedom and nails a Pele, setting up the hot tag to Itami. The fans quickly get into Hideo as he fires off his strikes on Breeze. Balor tags himself in though and hits the Sling Blade on Rose, but Itami tags himself in to break up the Coup de Grace. The fans cheer for Hideo, only to have Breeze roll him up for the pin at 11:52.

Rating: C. This was a by the book WWE tag team match and that's not the most entertaining thing in the world. I like that they're setting up Itami vs. Balor, but it would have been nice if they hadn't had Rose in there to kill off a bit of the suck. It's interesting that the fans cheered Itami more than Balor as I don't think I've heard that before.

Breeze kicks Balor and Itami down and gets cheered on by some of the crowd. Rose congratulates him but eats a Supermodel Kick.

Another package on Sami vs. Cena.

From after the match, Sami says he's tweaked his shoulder and made it even worse in the match. He doesn't know the results of the injury yet but he's too high off the match to worry about it. No word on if he'll be able to go for Takeover but the announcers don't say he won't be there.

It's time for the face to face hard sell between Zayn and Owens. Sami says they're not here to fight and we go to a long shot of Owens as what is clearly a recorded voiceover from Sami where he says his shoulder is hurt but the match is still happening. Back to live audio with Sami asking Owens to tell him why he did this. Just one time, tell him the truth. Was Owens jealous because Sami got here first?

Maybe it's about Kevin's son wanting to wear a Sami Zayn shirt instead of a KO shirt. That finally gets under Owens' skin but he walks out without saying a word. Sami asks if that's it, but Owens, with his back to Sami, says everything Sami just said is irrelevant. After Owens took the title from him, Zayn left to "clear his head", but it was because Sami was hurt. He's still hurt, and it was Owens that hurt him in the first place. At Takeover, he's going to do it again. This time though, Sami isn't coming back. Owens is so awesome at being evil and the lack of emotion in his voice as he talked about hurting Sami was great.

Overall Rating: C+. This show felt....uneven. I'm looking forward to Takeover but it's lacking that big, emotional feeling to it. Now that being said, NXT is the one place where I have the faith that they can pull off something special, but I'm just not sure what's going to do that next week. Zayn being able to go is obviously a good thing, but the question is what happens to him after that. Decent enough show this week but it feels like we already had the big moments to build the matches.

Results

Baron Corbin b. Solomon Crowe – End of Days

Sasha Banks b. ??? – Bank Statement

Alexa Bliss b. Carmella – Sparkle Splash

Tyler Breeze/Adam Rose b. Hideo Itami/Finn Balor – Small package to Itami

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NXT – May 6, 2015: Why Would I Want To Stop This?

NXT

Date: May 6, 2015

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Rich Brennan, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

We're two weeks away from Takeover: Unstoppable where Sami Zayn (shoulder permitting) will be challenging Kevin Owens for the NXT Title. Other than that, we're closing in on the showdown between Blake/Murphy and Enzo/Big Cass, which hinges around Carmella's possibly changing allegiances. As usual there's a lot of other good stuff going on in NXT so let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Emma vs. Charlotte

Emma still has Bayley's I'm A Hugger shirt and headbands, which she won't throw to the crowd. Charlotte gets caught in a headlock to start but gets taken down into a headscissors. A cravate with some knee lifts has Emma in even more trouble until she nails Charlotte in the knee to break up something off the middle rope. The knee gets driven into the apron and wrapped around the ropes as Emma seems to have been watching some Flair film.

Back in and something like a standing Curb Stomp to the back draws a BAN THAT MOVE chant and it's right back to the knee with a knee drop from

Emma to Charlotte's knee. Off to a half crab for a bit before Emma tries to drive the knee into the mat, only to have Charlotte land on her feet. A spear (BETTER THAN REIGNS!) gets two for Charlotte and Natural Selection connects for the pin at 5:45.

Rating: C+. This match is a good example of the difference between the NXT girls and the WWE Divas: these girls know how to work a match instead of just doing moves in some order. This felt like it had a logical flow to it instead of going from beginning to end and filling in the gaps here and there. Good little match here, though the knee work didn't mean much.

Bayley comes out post match and helps Emma up. They hug....but Bayley doesn't let go. The Belly to Bayley puts Emma down and Bayley hammers away until Charlotte breaks it up. Bayley gets her stuff back.

Video on Becky Lynch, who talks about going around the world and wrestling everywhere. She wound up here in green and dancing a jig because she's Irish. That's not the real Becky Lynch and she's not going to stand for it.

We get a sitdown interview with Michael Cole talking to Kevin Owens. What he did to Sami Zayn was personal, but because Sami wants the NXT Title back. The title means a better life for his family and that's all that matters. Cole presses him on this and Owens repeats himself but Cole still doesn't buy it. He asks if Owens would have done the same to anyone other than Zayn. That brings Owens back to the night he won the title, when Renee Young asked him about Sami instead of winning the title.

Cole hasn't even congratulated him on winning the title in the last two months, so Cole does just that, but asks for some respect in return. How could Kevin do what he did to someone who was close enough to him to be family? Cole asks about Sami being Owens' best man, but Owens won't get caught by a journalist's question. The truth is that Owens can't give him what he wants, but he's a good father who provides for his family. Oh and follow him on Twitter. This was a very different kind of Cole and I can't say I disliked him.

Bull Dempsey vs. Rhyno

This could be fun if they keep it short. The fans are behind Rhyno as the guys slug it out, followed by a quick belly to belly from Rhyno, followed by the Gore for the pin at 1:10. Smart choice there.

Post match, Rhyno says he wants Baron Corbin. That would be the next logical step.

Sasha Banks looks at a picture of Fabulous Moolah and says Moolah was the best until she came along. Becky Lynch is trying to use her to make a name for herself, but don't forget who made Lynch in the first place.

The man formerly known as Uhaa Nation signs his contract.

We get a video on Nation, where he talks about everyone coming here and wanting to be a champion. He's studied the great ones' history, but now its time to begin his history. No new name is given.

Scott Dawson/Dash Wilder vs. Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady

Enzo and Cass are nowhere in sight. Fans: "WHERE IS ENZO???" We cut to the back where Enzo and Cass are destroyed by Blake and Murphy as Carmella shouts at them to stop.

Sami has his own sitdown interview with Cole where he says Owens is lying about it not being personal. It drives Sami nuts that Owens has to keep playing these games with him. Next week, Sami will be waiting in the ring so how about they look each other in the eyes and have Owens explain why he did it. If Owens is some family man, set an example for his son and say why he did it.

We get a clip from Cena vs. Sami on Raw but it's not clear if Sami will be ready to go for Takeover.

William Regal is in the ring for the contract signing between Becky Lynch and Sasha Banks. Before signing, Becky lists off the countries she's wrestled in over the years and still can't believe she's here. She's made mistakes and sacrifices along the way but they were all worth it to get here, because she's ready to take over. Becky signs but Sasha drops the pen and pulls out a stamp for her signature instead. Fans: "LIKE A BOSS!" Sasha strikes the first blow and puts Lynch's face on the table with her

foot on Becky's head. The table is finally turned over and Lynch slaps on her seated armbar to make Banks tap.

Clip of Owens destroying Alex Riley after breaking up Riley's match against Sami last week.

Riley says he's having his second knee operation in two years. It's a big risk, but that's how his career has gone from leaving the Miz to leaving his commentary job to get back in the ring to demanding another match against Kevin Owens. However, last week when he was laid out, he heard a THANK YOU OWENS chant. That's what the fans want? The last shot of last week's show was Sami Zayn. That's what Commissioner Regal wants? Well he saw the last time Sami fought Owens and it didn't go well for Zayn. We're not going to be seeing Alex Riley for a long time, because that's what the people want.

Dana Brooke says she's been on a role since she was born. She's seen the new Tapout commercial and can't believe Charlotte is in there instead of the Total Diva. She'll run circles around Charlotte the next time she sees her. Deal with it.

Hideo Itami vs. Tyler Breeze

Finn Balor is at ringside. They circle each other to start until a wristlock sends Breeze running to the floor. Back in and Breeze bails again at the threat of a big kick. Hideo talks to the referee for some reason and gets kicked in the ribs (by Breeze, not the referee), but he nails Breeze in the ribs with a knee to take over. Breeze takes a break on the floor and we take a regular one. Back with Itami dropping some knees to the head and taking his kneepad off for a big one, only to kick Breeze in the jaw instead. Fans: "Hideo's gorgeous!/No he's not!"

Tyler comes back with a variety of stomps and a legdrop for two before we hit the chinlock. A big dropkick puts Itami down again but he punches Breeze out of the air. The top rope clothesline gets two for Itami and the fans want the GTS. They fight to the floor and Itami's Shotgun Kick hits Balor by mistake. Back in and the second Shotgun Kick puts Breeze down for the pin at 12:10.

Rating: C. Itami is getting there but it's some of the slowest progression I've ever seen. Breeze didn't seem to have his same fire tonight, but at least they did a really good job of setting up the triple threat with the misplaced kick. The false finishes in that match should be great and this was hardly torture to get through.

Breeze goes after Itami post match but Balor makes the save. That earns Balor a Supermodel Kick and Itami gets a Beauty Shot to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. This was all about setting up the Takeover show and that was done nearly to perfection. The Title match is already set up perfectly, the Tag Title match should be fine and there's another awesome build towards the Women's Title match, which has become the standard in NXT. Good show here, even without a focus on the wrestling.

Results

Charlotte b. Emma – Natural Selection

Rhyno b. Bull Dempsey – Gore

Hideo Itami b. Tyler Breeze – Shotgun Kick

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NXT – April 22, 2015: The New Plan

NXT

Date: April 22, 2015

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Corey Graves, Rich Brennan

We haven't heard from NXT Champion Kevin Owens in a good while so it's probably time to get him out here for more greatness. Alex Riley has called Owens out to meet him in the ring tonight because, due to quitting his commentary job, Riley has nowhere else to go but the ring. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Finn Balor vs. Tye Dillinger

Balor starts with some dropkicks as the fans want him to KILL THE JOBBER. The Pele sets up the Sling Blade and the Coup de Grace ends Dillinger at 2:28. This was an old school squashing and Balor looked great.

Tyler Breeze pops up on screen to call Finn Balor the flavor of the month. See you around Finn.

Dana Brooke says last week was the rebirth of the women's division in NXT because it was the debut of the strongest Diva ever. It's play time.

Kevin Owens is asked his thoughts on the match with Riley tonight but first, he thinks it's cold. Riley gave him a good fight a few weeks back but he's never going to be NXT Champion. After the loss tonight, he can go find a chair, table and headset to use because his future isn't in the ring. If you'll excuse him, he'd like to go find a coat.

Charlotte vs. Bayley vs. Becky Lynch

#1 contenders match. Becky gets double teamed to start and Bayley throws her to the floor, setting up another showdown

between herself and Charlotte. A chop out goes to Charlotte (of course) and we hit the figure four headlock with the flips to knock Bayley senseless. Becky sneaks back in with a nice German suplex to take Charlotte down and we take a break. Back with Becky dropping some running legs on Bayley for two.

Off to a knee hold as we get what might be the first ever crawler advertising NXT live shows. A limping Bayley fights out of the corner but charges into a knee. Becky outs on a complicated leg lock but Charlotte breaks it up with Natural Selection and no cover. The fans think that this is wrestling and better than the Divas.

Becky pulls Charlotte off the middle rope to break up a superplex attempt but Charlotte pulls her away from the corner into a powerbomb with Bayley adding a middle rope elbow to the jaw to drive Lynch down. Charlotte pulls Becky off the cover and puts her bad leg in the Figure Eight (the official name for the bridging version). Charlotte can't see though and Becky drapes her arm over Bayley for the pin at 11:32 with the hold still on.

Rating: B. The girls continue to steal the show and Becky is getting better every week. Lynch vs. Banks could be something interesting given their history and now I have a reason to believe it could be a good match. Charlotte has nothing left to do in NXT and is ready for the main roster and the destruction of her career as a result. Bayley needs to find something to do as she's been running in still adorable circles for a while now.

CJ Parker vs. Hideo Itami

Dang Parker just won't leave. Parker stalls to start as the fans want Hideo to kick his head off. A headlock slows Itami down but he drives a knee into Parker's ribs to set up some kicks for two. CJ punches him in the corner and gets two off a suplex. Another attempt doesn't work though and it's time for the strike off. A running delayed corner dropkick sets up the Shotgun Kick to give Hideo the pin at 4:06.

Rating: D+. This has to be Parker's last match as I can't find anything else taped for him. Hideo looked better here and it seems that the GTS is going to be his super finisher when he isn't using the Shotgun Kick. This did its job of getting Hideo back on track after his big moment was treated like nothing special by Big Show at Wrestlemania.

Becky Lynch doesn't like Sasha Banks taking credit for her career.

Rhyno vs. ???

No name for the jobber. Gore ends this in 27 seconds.

Blake and Murphy sing to Carmella when Enzo and Cass come up to accuse the two Sinatras of having Halitosis. Carmella is wearing the jewelry they gave her and that's not cool either. Cass brings up getting Carmella a job.

Alex Riley vs. Kevin Owens

Non-title and no sign of the coat. Owens gets in his face in the corner but Riley shoves him into the same corner. A nice dropkick sends Owens outside and the champ needs a breather. The mind games begin as Owens won't get back inside, which eventually draws Alex outside for a whip into the barricade.

We come back from a break with Owens choking on the middle rope and not seeing Riley as much of a threat. The backsplash gets two and we hit the chinlock. Riley fights up and hits a running elbow in the corner, followed by a flipping neckbreaker. He gets crotched on top though, setting up the Cannonball and Pop Up Powerbomb for the pin at 8:44.

Rating: C-. I wasn't wild on this one as it was basically a less energized version of their first match. Owens is a killer and looked fine while Alex looked like he could still go in the ring, but we knew those things after their match in Columbus. Not much to see here but Owens is always entertaining with his explosiveness.

Post match Owens loads up the apron powerbomb but Sami Zayn comes out for the big brawl. Security comes out but Sami dives on the pile to send Owens running away to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. This wasn't the best show but it seems that this was a show taped out of order which took away a lot of the chemistry. Sami coming out to go after Owens was a great sign though as it's time to pick things up all over again, likely for the next upcoming Takeover. Not a great show but it set up the future and gave us a good triple threat.

Results

Finn Balor b. Tye Dillinger – Coup de Grace

Becky Lynch b. Charlotte and Bayley – Lynch pinned Bayley while Bayley was in the Figure Eight

Hideo Itami b. CJ Parker – Shotgun Kick

Rhyno b. ??? – Gore

Kevin Steen b. Alex Riley – Pop Up Powerbomb

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NXT – April 8, 2015: Let's Go Hideo!

NXT

Date: April 8, 2015

Location: San Jose Convention Center, San Jose, California

Commentators: Rich Brennan, Corey Graves

We're on the road again with some matches taped for this year's Wrestlemania Axxess weekend. For at least the last two years, there has been a ring set up on the Axxess floor for live matches, including some title defenses. Tonight we're going to see some of those matches and maybe some from the well received house show the same weekend. Let's get to it.

The main story tonight is a tournament for a spot in the Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal at Wrestlemania XXXI. Here are the brackets.

Finn Balor

Baron Corbin

Bull Dempsey

Tyler Breeze

Hideo Itami

Jason Jordan

Kalisto

Adrian Neville

Video of Wrestlemania's impact on the area, which I believe was shown on both Raw and Smackdown.

We get a quick recap of the first round to give us the final four.

Balor rolled up Corbin to advance, Breeze beat Dempsey with a Beauty Shot, Itami's running kick to the face knocked Jordan out and the Red Arrow advanced Neville.

Here are the updated brackets.

Finn Balor

Tyler Breeze

Hideo Itami

Adrian Neville

Battle Royal Qualifying Tournament Semi-Finals: Hideo Itami vs. Adrian Neville

Neither guy gets an entrance. The crowd is very small, maybe about 200, as the ring is just tucked away in a corner of the convention center. They fight over a wristlock to start with Neville taking him down to the mat but Itami counters into an arm crank for a near fall of his own. The fans boo something off camera as the guys have a staredown and Neville teases going after whoever it was.

We hit the dueling chants as Neville grabs a headlock. That goes nowhere so Hideo hits a running kick to the chest and clotheslines Neville out to the floor. Neville makes it back in at nine and the fans don't seem thrilled with him. Some shots to the chest and a big back elbow get two on Hideo but he comes back with his three clotheslines (of course) and the tornado neck snap across the top rope.

The top rope clothesline gets two and Itami follows up with a sleeper (Fans: "GO TO SLEEP!") before switching off to a dragon sleeper. The GTS is countered and Neville blasts him with a superkick for two. Neville has to bail out of a shooting star and gets caught by the running dropkick in the corner. The Shotgun Kick sends Itami to the finals at 11:16.

Rating: C+. Good enough but Itami really needs to open up the offense. First it was nothing but kicks and now it's primarily clotheslines. Star throwing in some more submissions or throws or whatever, but stop using one or two moves over and over. Neville was working heel here and it was kind of odd to see. Not bad or anything but just a sharp change from his usual style.

Battle Royal Qualifying Tournament Semi-Finals: Finn Balor vs. Tyler Breeze

Balor gets an entrance. Breeze poses on the corner to start so Balor

dropkicks him in the face and poses exactly the same. More kicks to the chest get two on Breeze but he takes Balor down and puts on a chinlock (Tyler: "ASK HIM PLEASE!"). Balor quickly rolls through and hits a basement dropkick, followed by even more kicks to the face and chest for two. We definitely have a theme in this match. Breeze finally mixes it up with some forearms but charges into the Sling Blade. The Coup de Grace ends Breeze at 5:22.

Rating: C+. It's very telling how much more of a presence Balor has in half the time that Itami had. The guy is just awesome in the ring and has the full package. Even though the match was nothing special and Breeze was basically getting squashed for five minutes, it felt more entertaining than the previous match.

Dana Brooke debuts next week and calls herself the Total Diva.

Video package on the NXT house show from Wrestlemania weekend and it looks like a big Ring of Honor show, just with HHH in the ring. It really is amazing that WWE basically has their own in house indy company. This show looks like a blast.

Sami Zayn vs. Rhyno next week.

Battle Royal Qualifying Tournament Final: Hideo Itami vs. Finn Balor

We get a wide shot of the arena to show several hundred more people on the hard camera side. The fans are behind Balor as the guys do a wrestling sequence, ending with a standoff. Balor takes him down and cranks on the arm before a dropkick gets two. Itami comes back with some kicks to the chest and puts on a chinlock. That goes as far as a chinlock can take you and Finn rolls out for another basement dropkick.

An enziguri in the corner knocks Hideo off the top for two but he comes back with the top rope clothesline. The GTS is teased again but Balor escapes into the Pele to put both guys down again. Back up and Hideo wins a strike off, followed by a running basement dropkick in the corner. The Sling Blade out of nowhere drops Itami but he crotches Finn to break up the Coup de Grace. Yet another GTS attempt is countered and the Shotgun Kick sends Hideo to Wrestlemania at 8:15.

Rating: C. I wasn't feeling this one as much as they built up the GTS through the match but they still didn't let it hit. I'm glad Hideo won though as having Balor in his spot at Wrestlemania would have been a waste of him. All the kicks are getting annoying too and it's really hard to care when it's the same stuff all show long. Good enough match but it didn't have the time to get anywhere.

They shake hands post match.

We get a cool video on Hideo Itami, dating back to his press conference in Osaka, announcing his signing with WWE. Then he debuted in NXT, then he beat Balor in the match from earlier on this show. We see Itami going through the curtain to be greeted by the contingent of HHH, Tatsumi Fujinami and.....Hillbilly Jim?

Itami introduces us to his family and again, his English is fine. His language skills really aren't an excuse for his lack of promos. You can keep them short and get the point across well enough. Also included is a clip of Itami hitting the GTS on Breeze at the house show and how people freaked out online. Naturally, Stephanie is RIGHT THERE to comment on the impact on social media.

Itami is in the battle royal. We see him warming up backstage and all his friends praising him for making it this far this fast. He comes out to the crowd, Cole gives him a special introduction, he knocks out Dallas, and then Big Show treats him like any given jobber as Cole says "welcome to the big leagues." I'm SO glad we got to see him beaten down that fast. It just wouldn't have been complete without seeing Big Show looking dominant. Hideo cries once he gets backstage and a bunch of people congratulate him. Even Big Show says he looks forward to working with Itami again. His kids hug him to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. This is a hard one to grade as it's mainly a theme show with some wrestling included. The stuff on Itami is a really cool feature (Big Show dominance aside) and made him look like a big deal. Above all else though, I want to focus on that house show. On the Rise and Fall of ECW, Paul Heyman talks about wanting to make his shows into a big party where the fans say "WOW! I want to go there! I want to buy my

ticket and be right there in the middle of all that.”

That’s the feeling I got watching that house show. It looked like a blast and something I’d love to get to see. It’s the feeling you don’t get on Raw because NXT feels far more fan friendly and built on excitement. Like I said, it’s basically an in house indy company with very little connection to the main roster. This is a special promotion and it’s going to keep going for a long time at this pace.

Results

Hideo Itami b. Adrian Neville – Shotgun Kick

Finn Balor b. Tyler Breeze – Coup de Grace

Hideo Itami b. Finn Balor – Shotgun Kick

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