

NXT – January 1, 2015: The Anti-Raw

NXT

Date: January 1, 2015

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Rich Brennan, Renee Young, Corey Graves

We're starting a new year here and Sami Zayn is still on the shelf due to his attack at the hands of Kevin Owens. Last week was the Best of 2014 special with the only plot advancement being Charlotte defeating Sasha Banks in an R-Evolution rematch. I'm sure there will be other rematches in the future so let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Lucha Dragons vs. Jason Jordan/Tye Dillinger

Non-title. Dillinger chops Kalisto up against the ropes to start so Kalisto comes back with a three bounce springboard armdrag. Off to Jordan who tries the different approach of a release fall away slam to put the champions in early trouble. Jordan mockingly bows to Cara on the apron to allow some cheating. Renee keeps talking about how pretty the villains are but still manages to be adorable. That takes talent.

Dillinger slams Kalisto down again and draws a nice Tye chant. Back up and Kalisto flips forward to escape a backdrop and the hot tag brings in Cara. Everything breaks down and Kalisto takes Jordan out with a corkscrew dive, allowing Cara to hit a super victory roll for the pin on Dillinger at 3:07.

Rating: C. Standard pairing here but the match worked well enough. Dillinger and Jordan are fine for a pretty boy team with some nice technical skills. If nothing else they're much better in this role than as the second (and more talented) version of the American Males. The Dragons need some better competition though as this is getting a little repetitive.

The Vaudevillains come out and jump the champions post match.

CJ Parker is worried about facing Baron Corbin but Bull Dempsey comes in and tells him that taking down Corbin is for the better good. This sounded a bit like a bounty.

NXT moves back to Wednesdays in two weeks.

Enzo and Cass are here to introduce Carmella's opponent and the BLUE PANTS chant is just ridiculous. The guys give her an over the top entrance, complete with superlatives and a hummed theme song. Cass: "Inspired by Sami Zayn and straight from the discount rack!" Enzo: "Since we have last seen Blue Pants, she has met up with Steve and gotten a Blue's Clue."

Carmella vs. Blue Pants

Carmella runs her over and steps on Blue Pants's hair, thus freaking Renee out again. Enzo gets on the apron and....dances I think? The distraction lets Blue Pants grab a small package and BLUE PANTS WINS!!! Cass: "DUH-DUH-DA-DA!" Match ran 1:13.

This is another reason I love NXT: if this sort of reaction took place on Raw, WWE would make sure to either destroy Blue Pants and have people make stupid jokes about her or never bring her back in the first place. Here they give her a win to advance a story. The audience is happy, Blue Pants doesn't have to go anywhere else (though she could) and Carmella's story is advanced. What more can you ask for?

Carmella is mad at Enzo post match but Cass breaks it up.

Baron Corbin vs. CJ Parker

Parker's sign: "You can break my sign but you'll never break my spirit." Fans: "BREAK HIS SPIRIT!" Bull Dempsey is at ringside and watches snake eyes and a big boot set up End of Days for the pin at 0:29.

Post match Corbin asks if Dempsey is going to stand there or if they're going to do this. Dempsey goes after him but referees quickly break it up.

Regal announces that Sami Zayn will be back next week. Curtis Axel comes in and says he's barging in on Regal's interview. The boss never got back to him, even though Axel is a former Intercontinental Champion who has beaten HHH and John Cena. That sounds good to Regal and he makes Axel vs. Itami next week. Regal just made an announcement and a match for next week. His total time on screen: 74 seconds.

Here's Charlotte for a chat. She's asked what her new challenge will be and the Blue Pants chant starts up. Charlotte tells the crowd to not chant while she's talking, even though she wasn't saying anything yet. NXT is revolutionizing women's wrestling but she's beaten Sasha Banks twice now. Cue Banks and Lynch to surround her but Natalya comes out for the save before anything happens. That was a very odd response to the fans from Charlotte when she's clearly been a face for at least a month now.

The Vaudevillains get their title rematch next week.

We get a video from Sami, who is home for the holidays but doesn't know what to say about what's happened to him. He worked so hard to win the NXT Title but he can only think about Kevin Owens. When he comes back he'll say everything to the fans and to Owens himself. This was shot with a handheld camera instead of a professional camera and it gave the video a much more realistic and gritty feel.

Kevin Owens sits down with Renee Young. He didn't steal anyone's moment because Sami got his big celebration. That's enough of the interview for him though because he doesn't like being accused of things.

Hideo Itami/Finn Balor vs. Ascension

I know Balor's face paint (not here this time) got all the attention but I really like Hideo's gi inspired attire. They go at it immediately with the dream team taking over. Ascension bails before the seated corner dropkicks can connect until it settles down to Viktor vs. Balor. Finn charges into the corner with a running chop before it's off to Itami, who the fans are really excited to see.

Back to Finn for more forearms and chops before Itami drops a knee for

two. We hit the chinlock on Viktor as a Hideo chant starts up. Finn does a nice jump over the ropes to avoid a charging Viktor before kicking Konnor off the apron. The distraction lets Viktor get in a big uppercut to knock Balor outside though as we take a break.

Balor fights out of a chinlock from Konnor but the Ascension uses their old school double team beatdown to keep him in trouble. It worked for the LOD and Demolition so why not here? Off to a reverse chinlock from Konnor for a bit before a big uppercut gets two. Finn gets spiked like a football to break up a hot tag attempt as the beating continues. Slugging it out with Viktor goes as well as you would expect it to go so it's back to Konnor to just hammer Balor in the head.

The Pele Kick finally gives Finn an opening and the double tag brings in Itami and Viktor as things speed up. Hideo snaps Viktor's neck across the top rope and scores with a top rope clothesline, only to walk into an STO for two. Itami teases the GTS again to another big reaction (and a GTS chant) but Konnor makes the save. Finn takes Konnor to the floor, leaving Itami to kick Viktor in the head for the pin at 16:15.

Rating: B-. I liked this one a bit more than the first match, even though I'm not sure why this match needed to exist. It's basically the same thing they did in the first match but with less hype. I still liked it a good deal though and it was more than enough for a TV main event. The reaction to Itami is a very good sign though as I don't remember people being into him like that since his debut. Also he was showing a more varied offense here and not just kicking all the time so he's growing in the ring. Good signs all around.

Overall Rating: B. Story advancement, matches made for next week, everything moving. This show is the anti-Raw and it still gets more done in an hour than Raw can get done in three. Sami coming back to face Owens is going to be great and you can imagine how awesome their promos are going to be before setting up the big showdown. Really good and fun show this week that got a lot done in a little time.

Results

Lucha Dragons b. Tye Dillinger/Jason Jordan – Super victory roll to

Dillinger

Blue Pants b. Carmella – Small package

Baron Corbin b. CJ Parker – End of Days

Hideo Itami/Finn Balor b. Ascension – Kick to Viktor's head

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book on the History of the Royal Rumble at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00PZ1GR7E>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

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

2014 Awards News Story Of The Year

This one is a big easier to get through. I'm going to knock out the stories that just don't measure up.

1. TNA thrown off SpikeTV, goes to Destination America.

At the end of the day, TNA just doesn't matter in the big picture. They've been the same default second biggest promotion in America for years now and they're such a tiny blip on the radar that this just doesn't mean much. Now they're going to have even fewer people watching their product which is likely to keep screwing up and not capitalizing on the talent they have. It's something you mention but it's just not a big deal due to how insignificant TNA really is.

2. WWE Network doesn't do that well.

No it hasn't, but again I'd like to point out that we're about nine months into something that is going to direct the company for like, ever. They're already getting it better and the numbers could go up over time. It's a story, but WAY too early to tell us much.

3. WWE signs Kenta, Steen and Devitt.

Much like the Network but in the other direction, it's hard to say what this means. It's a big splash and gets headlines, but we need to see what these guys are going to mean on the main roster.

Now we get to the big stories.

1. Ultimate Warrior Dies After Appearing On Raw.

It's not often in my life that I'm shocked by something, but this actually stunned me. I mean...he was there twenty four hours earlier and then HHH is breaking news that he's passed away. It capped off the perfect weekend to end someone's career, but my goodness this was jarring.

2. Daniel Bryan Needs Surgery.

I don't think anything else changed the entire landscape of wrestling as much as this did. Bryan was the guy and was going to be the focus of the company for the rest of the year and now he can't even get in the ring. It's going to be very interesting to see where he is when he gets back, because he's going to have to rebuild a lot of his career.

3. CM Punk.

I think we have a winner. At the end of the day, Punk walking out changed a lot (though not as much as Bryan) immediately.

However, it's all the aftermath that has been the talk of the wrestling world this year. From Punk just leaving to the teasing of him coming back to the podcast to him signing with UFC (and doing the same thing that he criticized Rock and Lesnar for), nothing has meant more this year than the never ending saga of CM Punk. To put this in perspective, I turned on ESPN today and Punk was sitting there on Sportscenter in the middle of the afternoon. I don't remember Cena doing that, but Punk is right there doing it now. Punk is the story of the year and could be next year as well.

NXT Takeover: R-Evolution: Yo Adrian! This Show Is Awesome!

NXT Takeover: R-Evolution

Date: December 11, 2014

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Alex Riley, Rich Brennan, Corey Graves

We're at the latest major show for NXT and the main event is a pick em at this point. We have Sami Zayn putting his NXT career on the line for one more shot at Adrian Neville's NXT Championship. Other than that we have Hideo Itami/Finn Balor teaming up to take on the Ascension and the debut of Kevin (Steen) Owens. The card is stacked so let's get to it.

The opening video focuses on the main event but also gets in a bit of Kevin Owens.

Kevin Owens vs. CJ Parker

Owens hits two straight running clotheslines in the corner at the bell and the Cannonball crushes Parker in less than fifteen seconds. He rips up Parker's My Fight Matters sign and hits a HUGE flip dive over the top

to take Parker out. Back in and Owens hammers away, only to eat a boot to the jaw.

Parker misses a running backplash but the Third Eye gets a VERY close two. Back up and Owens no sells a charge in the corner and takes CJ's head off with a clothesline. Owens is bleeding from the eye as he picks up Parker for a kind of pumphandle shoulder breaker. He throws Parker up and powerbombs him in half for the pin at 3:22.

Rating: B. WHOA. Yeah the rating is high but this was one of the most impressive debuts I've seen in a very long time. Owens looked like a killer out there and just destroyed Parker. I even dug that they gave Parker some offense and a near fall to add some drama. Owens is the kind of insane guy that they haven't had in awhile and seemed a lot like what they were shooting for with Dean Ambrose. Excellent stuff.

Neville is ready.

Lucha Dragons video.

Tag Team Titles: Vaudevillains vs. Lucha Dragons

The Dragons are defending and beat the Vaudevillains in the #1 contenders tag team tournament a few months back to give the Vaudevillains a reason for revenge. Gotch and Cara get things going with a standing Lionsault getting two for the champ. A headscissors/armdrag combo takes both Vaudevillains down before it's off to Kalisto for a front facelock. Back to Sin for a dropkick as the fans are entirely behind the challengers. English comes in off a blind tag and low bridges Cara out to the floor. Fans: "THAT WAS MANLY!"

They head back inside with Gotch cranking on the neck before getting two off a crucifix. English sends him outside for a baseball slide, earning him a chant of his own. The villains keep taking turns on Cara with Aiden cranking on a chinlock. Sin finally pops up and flips over English to make the tag off to Kalisto. Things immediately speed up and everything breaks down. The Dragons send them to the floor for a big double dive, only to have English shove Gotch out of the way to take the shot himself. Fans: "CHIVALRY!" Back in and the Salida Del Sol on Gotch retains the

titles at 6:50.

Rating: C. The match was pretty standard but the ending was really a surprise as I would have bet on the Vaudevillians to pick up the belts here. That being said, it's not the worst idea in the world as the Vaudevillians are being turned face by the audience reactions alone so it's only a matter of time anyway. Still a surprise though.

Tye Dillinger vs. Baron Corbin

As usual the fans count the time of Corbin's match, ending at a far higher than usual 39 seconds with End of Days. The match was so short that I didn't have time to mention Bull Dempsey watching from ringside.

Sami is in the locker room and turns down Cass and Enzo's offer of milk. He looks over and sees Owens looking back at him. We can't hear anything said (if anything was) as we're listening to an inset interview from yesterday with Sami saying he's ready.

We recap Hideo Itami/Finn Balor vs. Ascension. Itami is a hotshot rookie and Ascension are bullies. Balor debuted to help Itami in his war and this is the showdown.

Hideo Itami/Finn Balor vs. Ascension

Balor has an insane entrance now with a pounding red light that sounds like a heartbeat, a ton of smoke and face paint that looks like a cross between Delirious, Great Muta and Ultimate Warrior. Ascension looks stunned as the fans are bowing to Finn. It's a brawl to start before the bell with Ascension getting pounded down in the corner. Stereo corner dropkicks send them out to the floor and we get the opening bell.

Itami dropkicks Viktor down to start and it's off to Finn for a slingshot stomp. Balor charges into a knee in the corner to change control and it's off to Konnor. Back to Itami who hammers away but eats a flapjack as Ascension keeps control. Viktor breaks up a hot tag attempt with a hard elbow drop to the back for two. Off to a reverse chinlock followed by a fist to the head and yet another chinlock. Ascension keeps up the double beatdown as Viktor puts on another chinlock. Hideo finally kicks Konnor

to the floor and dives for a tag, only to have Konnor knock Finn off the apron.

The hot tag comes a few seconds later and Finn cleans house with enziguris. Viktor avoids the top rope double stomp but eats a reverse Impaler. Konnor makes the save but Itami takes him to the floor, only to have to save Finn from an STO. Itami loads up GTS (his invention) and the fans go NUTS, but Konnor makes the save. Hideo breaks up the Fall of Man and the super team goes up for double foot stomps for the pin on Ascension at 11:45.

Rating: C+. This was better than I was expecting but the ending was never in doubt. I can't get over that ROAR for the GTS attempt though. It's a good sign that Itami can do more than kick because he really hasn't shown me much yet. Ascension is ready for WWE and has been for like a year, so this is probably their swan song.

Roman Reigns is in the back and says he's here to see an awesome main event. His goal is to be the first NXT alumni to become WWE World Heavyweight Champion, which creates some continuity issues as that would be Daniel Bryan. I know it's a different version of NXT but it's a bit confusing.

Ric Flair is here and gives Charlotte a hug for luck.

We recap Charlotte vs. Sasha Banks. They used to be friends but Charlotte won the Women's Title. Banks says that belongs to her and tonight is the showdown.

Women's Title: Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte

Sasha throws her modified Charlotte shirt (Charlotte: "Do it with some Flair!" Banks: "Do it like a Boss!") and the champ chases her to the ropes. They trade chops in the corner with Charlotte getting the better of it (of course) but Banks gets in a quick kick to the head to take over. She sends Charlotte hard into the steps for two back inside but stops to yell at Little Naitch.

Banks drives her into the corner for some shoulders to the ribs before a

double knee to the ribs has Charlotte in even more trouble. She mocks the strut though and Charlotte gets all fired up. The champ is so fired up that they mess up a spot, followed by a Backstabber into a double arm stretch from Banks. She pulls Charlotte down by the hair out of the corner and puts on a Figure Four neck lock, complete with a WOO. Charlotte finally lifts her up for an electric chair drop to put both girls down.

A series of forearms puts Banks down and a suplex into a neckbreaker gets two on Banks. Charlotte misses a charge though and falls out to the floor, setting up a pretty bad looking suicide dive from Sasha. They slug it out with Banks getting the better of it but eating a big spear to give Charlotte control again. She charges into a boot but counters the Bank Statement.

The Figure Four is countered into a small package for two and Banks gets two off a neckbreaker. A big suplex sends Banks flying and the fans think THIS IS WRESTLING. Charlotte tries a moonsault but has to land on her feet, only to flip forward for a backsplash for two as Banks gets her feet on the ropes. Sasha sends her hard face first into the middle buckle but Charlotte throws her off to block a superplex. A top rope Natural Selection is enough to retain the title at 12:06.

Rating: B. The Women's Title match has become a highlight on all these shows and Banks just had her best match ever by about a million miles. Much like Ascension, Charlotte has been ready for the next level for months now and really should be on Raw like tomorrow. Well Monday but you get the idea. Really solid match here and a great match that happened to have women in it rather than a good women's match if that makes sense.

Long recap of Zayn vs. Neville. The short version is Zayn has never won the big one but has to win the title here or leave NXT.

NXT Title: Sami Zayn vs. Adrian Neville

Neville is defending and they have over thirty five minutes for this. After the big match intros, we're finally ready to go. Feeling out process to start with no one able to get an early advantage. Neville cranks on a wristlock but Sami takes over with one of his own. They head

back to the mat with Adrian working on a hammerlock before grabbing a chinlock. The champ grabs an armbar and another OLE chant starts up.

Sami spins out and grabs a wristlock of his own but Neville flips over to land on his feet instead of on the mat. Adrian says bring it but gets caught in the armbar again. Neville flips into the corner again but walks into a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker to give Sami his first real advantage. The champ rolls outside and takes the bouncing moonsault as Sami is in full control. Neville takes his time getting back in and gets rolled up for two. He sends Sami into the buckle to take over and a dropkick to the back of his head gets another near fall.

We hit the chinlock for a bit before a big uppercut gets two for Adrian. Neville drops a series of knees to the chest for two more and we hit another chinlock. A nice middle rope dropkick gets the same result and Neville is slowly getting frustrated. Neville kicks him in the face a few times but eats a hard clothesline and dropkick to give Sami an opening. Back to the floor but Adrian rolls back inside to avoid the dive and snaps off a hurricanrana to send Zayn to the floor. Sami does the exact same thing to avoid a dive and backdrops him to the floor, setting up the signature flip dive to take over again. Sweet sequence.

Back in again and the high cross body gets two for Sami. Neville tries to cartwheel at Sami but winds up on Neville's shoulders for a spinning Blue Thunder Bomb for two. Now the real pressure is starting to get to Sami but a jawbreaker brings him back to reality. A running boot to the face and a bridging German suplex get two for Neville and both guys are getting winded. Sami runs the corner but gets caught in a sitout powerbomb, landing HARD on the back of his head for two.

Back up and Neville fires off some hard forearms to the head but Sami gets right in his face and they slug it out until Zayn takes his head off with a clothesline. Neville takes him right back down with an enziguri out of the corner. Fans: "NO! NO! NO!" The Red Arrow hits knees and there's the Koji Clutch but Adrian gets his foot on the ropes, nearly sending Sami to tears. Neville counters the suplex into the corner with a rollup but the referee gets bumped off the kickout.

He's back up quickly though but a loud superkick and a reverse hurricanrana (Sami landing on his head again) gets a VERY close two on Sami after he checked on the referee. Back up and Sami charges into a forearm but starts rolling Germans, capped off by a half nelson/chicken wing suplex. Neville bails before Sami can try the Helluva Kick but Sami follows him out for the dive through the ropes into the tornado DDT. Back in again and the Helluva Kick connects but the referee goes down again with Adrian possibly pulling him into the path of the kick.

Neville throws in the title belt but a big boot knocks him down. Sami looks at the belt and picks it up, drops some F Bombs, but can't bring himself to cheat. Neville grabs a rollup for two but walks into the exploder in the corner. The Helluva Kick connects and Sami FINALLY wins the title at 23:55.

Rating: A. Oh yeah it rocked. This was exactly what it should have been with Sami finally exorcising his demons and winning the belt. I loved that section near the end where he wanted to cheat but finally threw it down and won with what brought him to the dance. This was the outstanding showdown main event and exactly how they should have done it. Adrian comes off looking like a warrior who might have cheated (it wasn't clear) to try to keep the title. Great stuff here with some very close near falls and incredible drama.

You can hear the fans thanking Neville during the replay package.

The locker room comes out to celebrate and Owens hugs his friend. Even Pat Patterson is here to celebrate. Neville gets back up and stares Sami down. The new champ extends a hand but Neville kicks it away and pulls him in for a hug. Everyone clears out and Sami gets to do a victory dance. One more hug from Owens looks to end the show...BUT HE BLASTS SAMI WITH A RIGHT HAND AND POWERBOMBS HIM ON THE APRON! What a perfect fake out as everything looked finished and then they throw that curve.

Overall Rating: A. As usual, this show blew the roof off the place and continues to be the show I look forward to more than almost anything else. The worst match on the show was a totally fine tag match and Owens was about a thousand times more awesome than I was expecting. Couple that

with a Match of the Year candidate with the perfect ending and there's almost nothing bad here. Outstanding show and again worth checking out.

Results

Kevin Owens b. CJ Parker – Powerbomb

Lucha Dragons b. Vaudevillians – Salida Del Sol to Gotch

Baron Corbin b. Tye Dillinger – End of Days

Hideo Itami/Finn Balor b. Ascension – Double pin after top rope foot stomps

Charlotte b. Sasha Banks – Top rope Natural Selection

Sami Zayn b. Adrian Neville – Helluva Kick

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book on the History of the Royal Rumble at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00PZ1GR7E>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

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

Finally, I'm holding a Holiday Special for my e-books: any two of them for just \$5. Check out the details here.

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2014/11/28/holiday-sale/>

NXT – December 4, 2014: Inzayn Intensity

NXT

Date: December 4, 2014

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Jason Albert, Alex Riley, Rich Brennan

It's the last show before R-Evolution and I'd assume tonight is just going to be about firming up matches for next week. I'm really hoping we don't get a rushed heel turn from Neville as the match would be far more entertaining with both guys staying on the paths that got them here. Other than that we might have some fallout from Bayley calling out Lynch and Banks last week. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Charlotte vs. Mia Yim

Non-title. Charlotte starts with a WOO before sending Mia into the corner for a slap to the back. Natural Selection is good for the pin at 51 seconds.

Post match Sasha Banks, in a Charlotte shirt, comes out and says just give her the title now. Charlotte tells her to bring it and starts a ratchet chant. Sasha says she has more flair than Charlotte and her daddy. She's going to beat Charlotte so badly that she'll be a bigger loser than her old man. This brings out Bayley in a big leg brace and on crutches to tell Sasha to shut her ratchet face. Banks kicks her in the knee and runs off when Charlotte comes up the ramp. Sasha tries to get a cheap shot but Charlotte drags her to the ring and says get a ref out here. Becky Lynch sneaks in from behind though and Banks lays out the champ.

Time for another silent movie from the Vaudevillains! This time the police commissioner calls them to say the Lucha Dragons are dropping water balloons off the roof of city hall. After a training montage

(complete with Gotch fighting a video of a tiger), the Vaudevillains attach an anvil to the Dragons, sending them down...into a mushroom cloud? Gotch is glad that they took the belts away because they would have just weighed the Dragons down even more. Keep in mind though that no Lucha Dragons were harmed in the filming of this motion picture, but that won't be the case next week. These things are brilliant.

Vaudevillians vs. Buddy Murphy/Wesley Blake

English jumps over Blake to start but dives into a powerslam for two. A snapmare sends Wesley into the ropes though in a nice idea. It's off to Murphy as the fans sound like they're sighing for some reason. Off to Gotch for some Hindu Squats while holding Buddy in an Indian Deathlock. English comes back in for some elbows to the leg before it's back to Gotch to stay on the leg. Murphy finally rolls away and makes the tag as everything breaks down. Blake is sent to the floor for a big crash and the Whirling Dervish ends Murphy at 4:15.

Rating: D+. Not much to see here but the Vaudevillains are getting better in the ring. Those vignettes are as good as anything I've seen in a long time. Murphy and Blake are decent in the ring but they really need to stop losing every time if they're supposed to have a future.

Regal is in the back with Tyler Breeze, who hasn't seen Marcus Louis since he wandered off last week. Tyson Kidd comes in and says he wants a rematch with Balor, but Regal makes it a tag with Itami/Balor vs. Kidd/Breeze. This took less than a minute and covered two stories. Why does it take Raw twenty minutes to cover one?

Bull Dempsey vs. Elias Samson

The fans count until the flying headbutt ends Samson at 22 seconds.

Baron Corbin vs. ???

End of Days, 11 seconds. Of course Bull was watching from the stage.

Kevin Owens video, talking about how he's fought and teamed with Seth Rollins, Daniel Bryan, Adrian Neville, and Sami Zayn (called Owens' best friend), but WWE called all of them first. Now it's his turn.

Tyler Breeze/Tyson Kidd vs. Hideo Itami/Finn Balor

Kidd holds the ropes open for Natalya and offers to do the same for Breeze in a funny bit. Itami and Kidd get things going but it's quickly off to Breeze, whose arm is quickly yanked. Balor comes in with a slingshot stomp for no count but Kidd makes a blind tag and decks Finn to take over as we go to a break. Back with Breeze coming in to stomp Finn in the corner before it's quickly back to Kidd for even faster stomping.

A neckbreaker gets two for Tyson and we hit a bow and arrow. Balor fights up but misses a dropkick to put him right back down. Breeze grabs a neckbreaker of his own for two before Kidd comes back in for a hard kick to the leg. A slingshot legdrop to the back of the head gets two for Kidd but he eats a Pele (now called a soccer kick), allowing Finn to tag Hideo. Itami fires off a series of kicks to destroy Breeze before hitting a delayed running dropkick in the corner to a sitting Tyler. Everything breaks down and Balor hits Shadows Over Hell, setting up Itami's kick to the back of the head for the pin at 11:30.

Rating: C. Pretty standard tag match here but Itami continues to look totally one dimensional. I know he isn't the biggest guy in the world but he needs to do something more than just kick a lot. Daniel Bryan has proven that a smaller guy can do more than just strike while still having it be a major part of his offense so it certainly can be done.

Post match Finn tells Ascension to bring everything they have because he's going to show them something they've never seen before.

Here's Adrian Neville for the final speech before the title match. A lot of people have said he should be conflicted by this match, but his goal is the same as always: to win at all cost. Some people say that he should be ashamed of what he did to retain the title at Fatal Four Way and every other title match. If he had it his way, it would have gone completely differently, but that's the fundamental difference between himself and Sami: Zayn doesn't have the killer instinct and that's why he'll never be NXT Champion.

This brings out Sami who says he's been listening to everything Neville has been saying and it's ticking him off. Who is Neville to act like

Sami's babysitter and tell him how he should live? Whatever Sami decides to do after the match is up to him and his actions, not Neville's. Adrian backs off a bit and says he respects Sami more than anyone else and next week it's going to be an honor to face Sami in the match of their careers.

Adrian offers a handshake but Sami says no. This is where he goes wrong every single time but he won't do it here. This isn't about respect and he slaps Adrian in the face. Neville doesn't get to end him because it's going to be Sami ending Adrian's story and taking that title. This wasn't a heel turn for either guy but rather Sami just being more intense this time around.

Overall Rating: B-. The wrestling wasn't great here but I'm wanting to see Takeover a lot more than I did coming in. That main event has me drooling because you know those two are going to tear the house down with the near falls. The only match that doesn't do much for me is Ascension vs. Itami/Balor as there doesn't seem to be a ton of drama there, but whatever gets Ascension onto the main roster is a good thing at this point. This show did exactly what it was supposed to do and sets up a good looking card for next week.

Results

Charlotte b. Mia Yim – Natural Selection

Vaudevillians b. Wesley Blake/Buddy Murphy – Whirling Dervish to Murphy

Bull Dempsey b. Elias Samson – Flying headbutt

Baron Corbin b. ??? – End of Days

Finn Balor/Hideo Itami b. Tyler Breeze/Tyson Kidd – Kick to Breeze's head

NXT – November 27, 2014: Thank You NXT Fans

NXT

Date: November 27, 2014

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Rich Brennan, Renee Young, Jason Albert

The big story this week is Finn Balor facing Tyson Kidd in his first singles match in NXT. It's going to be interesting to see how much more impressive he is than Itami, who hasn't done much for me, though he needs a longer match than he's had so far. Other than that we're gearing up for Zayn vs. Neville II in two weeks and it should be glorious. Let's get to it.

Marcus Louis vs. Tyler Breeze

Louis continues to be in a state of shock and potentially psychotic over losing his hair. He doesn't take his towel off for a few moments as Tyler looks disgusted by Louis. Fans: "WHERE'S YOUR EYEBROWS???" Breeze says he can't be asked to take on the uggo of all uggos and won't be the precious to Louis' Gollum. Marcus takes the towel off his head and Breeze is even more disturbed. Now he thinks Louis is an idiot and a freak. "NOBODY WILL EVER LOVE YOU!" Louis looks away and turns around into the Beauty Shot for the pin at 2:28. Breeze was as evil as I've ever seen him here and I LOVED IT.

Louis rolls out and screams as he leaves. I could go for more of this Louis Is Nuts thing as he's selling the heck out of it. Marcus gets back in the ring and the fans think this is awkward. After a break, Louis very slowly walked out the front door of the arena.

Carmella vs. Blue Pants

Enzo says he has a surprise for Carmella (Fans: "BLUE PANTS! BLUE PANTS! BLUE PANTS!") and of course it's Blue Pants, complete with Big Cass humming a theme song for her. He does the entrances and the fans actually

give her a standing ovation. Fans: "REMATCH! REMATCH! REMATCH!" Carmella runs her over to start and does it again with a dropkick. Off to the leg crossface from Carmella for the submission at 0:48.

Carmella laughs at Enzo post match. They better not split up Enzo and Cass.

Balor says Kidd should send a tape of their match tonight to Kidd's uncle Bret.

Lucha Dragons vs. Tye Dillinger/Jason Jordan

Non-title. Cara and Dillinger get things going with Sin grabbing the arm and taking him back into the corner for a tag off to Kalisto. The champs keep taking turns on the arm until Dillinger takes Sin over to the corner for the tag off to Jordan. In something you don't see all that often, Jason covers him for no count. Back to Dillinger for some stomps but we get heel miscommunication to frustrate Dillinger. The hot tag brings in Kalisto to speed things up with a very high springboard wristdrag to Tye. Cara's suicide dive takes Tye out again and the Salida Del Sol pins Jordan at 3:35.

Rating: D+. Glorified squash here but the Dragons looked good going into their title match against the Vaudevillains at the next Takeover. The problem though is their reign hasn't had the time to build yet, and when you're coming off a year long title reigns, it's kind of hard to get into one that has consisted of the rematch with the champs and potentially the feud where the titles change. At least there's been a bit of build to the upcoming defense though.

We recap Sasha Banks costing Bayley a match against Becky Lynch last week and Charlotte making the save post match.

Kevin Owens, complete with a FIGHT t-shirt, is coming in two weeks.

Here's Bayley with something to say. She doesn't have a match tonight ("B00!") but she has to deal with something tonight. Charlotte may not be here, but she's used to dealing with bullies like Lynch and Banks. When she was a kid she was bullied every day and when she came home from

school crying, her mom told her to go back the next day and stand up to the bullies because they're cowards. Cue Banks and Lynch to shove Bayley but she nails Sasha in the face. Becky nails her from behind though and they stomp away until the referees come out. Again, Lynch looks like a star here.

Natalya is excited for her husband to get to face Balor tonight. Tyson cuts her off (Natalya: "But I'm putting you over!") and says Justin cost them that match because he has a knack for losing. Tyson has been working with Bret recently and is the new Hitman. Balor is a guy who can't live up to his hype. Yeah he's good, but he's not THAT good. Natalya goes to hug him but Tyson has to go Facetime with the cats. She doesn't seem too bothered by this.

Time for a silent movie starring the Vaudevillains. The Lucha Dragons are trying to rob a bank and it's up to the Vaudevillains to stop them. But first, TRAINING MONTAGE! English does push-ups while Gotch gets in a fist fight WITH A BEAR. They go for a run before heading to the bank where they find a box of TNT. It's the Mini Lucha Dragons behind it of course, and they wind up getting blow up, somehow making Gotch and English the NXT Tag Team Champions. Voiceover: "No Lucha Dragons were harmed in this production, but at NXT Takeover: R-Evolution, we make no such promises!" This was GREAT.

We run down the Takeover card and Sasha vs. Charlotte is confirmed.

Finn Balor vs. Tyson Kidd

Itami/Balor vs. Ascension is confirmed too. Technical sequence to start with Tyson grabbing a wristlock to take over but Balor spins him down to the mat in a nice counter. Kidd comes back with a chinlock as the fans call him Nattie's Wife. It turns to a TYSON CHICKEN chant as Balor dropkicks him to the floor, only to have Kidd hide behind Natalya to avoid a dive.

We take a break and come back with Balor kicking Kidd from the apron but having his springboard broken up. Kidd knocks him out to the floor and follows up with a neckbreaker outside. Back in and Tyson hammers away in the corner before catapulting him face first into the bottom turnbuckle

for two. Another chinlock doesn't last that long but Kidd stops the comeback with a kick to the ribs. Tyson puts him in the Tree of Woe for some knees but stops to yell at Natalya for not helping him cheat.

There's a running dropkick in the corner for two and we hit another chinlock. Kidd: "ASK HIM!" Referee: "He said no!" Kidd: "WELL ASK HIM IN IRISH!" Back up and Balor escapes a suplex and fires off some chops followed by a Pele. A spinning suplex gets two for Finn but he charges into a boot in the corner. Balor kicks him off the top but misses the top rope stomp. Tyson can't hook the Sharpshooter so he sends Balor face first into the buckle again. The springboard elbow hits knees so Finn hits a running knee to the face. Up top again for the stomp but Ascension runs in for the DQ at 14:41.

Rating: B-. Good but not great match here as they were just getting going near the end. Balor continues to look like a much more well rounded guy than Itami, but again I need to see Itami in a long match like this one to get a better feel for him. Kidd is still the work horse of this show and I'm glad that he's getting some shots on Raw as a reward.

Itami comes in for the save and a big pull apart brawl ends the show.

Overall Rating: B-. I want to see R-Evolution. That's the key to TV shows like this and it's worked like a charm here. They spent last week building up the main event and this week it was all about almost every other match on the card. This was a good, entertaining episode with more wrestling to balance out last week's talking heavy show. Good stuff again and the big show looks like it could blow the roof off the place again.

Results

Tyler Breeze b. Marcus Louis – Beauty Shot

Carmella b. Blue Pants – Leg crossface

Lucha Dragons b. Tye Dillinger/Jason Jordan – Salida Del Sol to Jordan

Finn Balor vs. Tyson Kidd went to a no contest when the Ascension interfered

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book on the History of the Royal Rumble at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00PZ1GR7E>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

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

NXT – November 13, 2014: I'll Take Neville To Block

NXT

Date: November 13, 2014

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Jason Albert, Alex Riley, Rich Brennan

Tonight is a big show for NXT as we have the showdown between Sami Zayn and Adrian Neville for the NXT Title. I don't quite believe we're getting the full match tonight though, or at least we're not getting a clean ending. Other than that we have the fallout from the debut of Finn Balor, who will be helping Itami in his war against the Ascension. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Itami vs. Ascension and Balor debuting last week.

Opening sequence.

Here's Balor to open the show with a rather epic entrance. He says he's here in NXT because he's the future...and here are Natalya and Tyson Kidd arm in arm. Tyson is sure that Balor has a fascinating story but no one cares. Fact. Kidd was brought into this business as a Hart, so the first thing he was ever taught was respect. Cue Justin Gabriel who says a new

international superstar is here every week to be a top guy. Finn has to get through them first though, but let's pause for a WHO ARE YOU chant at Gabriel. Kidd and Gabriel get in the ring but here's Itami, walking very slowly out to save his buddy.

Finn Balor/Hideo Itami vs. Tyson Kidd/Justin Gabriel

This should be good. Gabriel and Itami get things going but it's quickly off to Kidd for a wristlock. Balor comes in for the first time and Tyson is already out for Gabriel. A dropkick puts Gabriel down but he bails to the floor, setting up a big flip dive from Balor as we take a break. Back with Itami putting Justin in a chinlock and getting two off a kick to the chest. Off to Balor vs. Kidd with Tyson taking him outside for a neckbreaker on the floor. Gabriel hits a LOUD chop on the floor before kicking Finn in the back.

Tyson does the same for two as the heels take over on Finn in the corner. We hit the chinlock on Balor before Justin cranks on both arms at the same time. Kidd and Gabriel keep making the fast tags until Balor nails Tyson with a Pele Kick. The hot tag brings in Itami to clean house and a big kick gets two on Kidd. Justin dives into a knee to the ribs for two as everything breaks down. The newcomers hit stereo corner dropkicks, setting up a top rope double stomp to end Gabriel at 10:34.

Rating: C+. This was a much more promising match from Itami than the previous weeks singles efforts. Balor continues to look like the star of the team though and the more complete wrestler. Itami is coming around though and just needs some more time to get used to the WWE style.

We look back at Zayn vs. Neville from about a year ago in a great #1 contenders match.

Zayn says tonight feels different than all of the previous times. The road to redemption is more than just a nice tagline because destiny never makes mistakes. Tonight is going to unfold just like it's supposed to.

Sasha Banks vs. Alexa Bliss

Banks sends her into the corner to start and nails a low clothesline for

an early two. The fans argue over whether Sasha is ratched as she puts Bliss in a modified surfboard. Bliss nails a dropkick but gets caught in the Backstabber into the Bank Statement for the tap out at 2:18.

Banks wants to make her title match against Charlotte official. She doesn't do anything to accomplish that but she does indeed want it.

Neville says Sami is his friend but he's going to be disappointed again tonight.

Lucha Dragons vs. Wesley Blake/Buddy Murphy

We need new jobbers around here. Non-title again. Kalisto throws Blake around to start but Murphy sneaks in to catch Kalisto in mid air for a suplex. Murphy gets two off a clothesline before it's back to Blake for a top rope stomp to the back for two of his own. Buddy comes back in to hammer away but Kalisto slips through his legs to tag Sin. Cara speeds things way up but gets thrown into Blake to knock him off the apron. Kalisto hits a HUGE corkscrew plancha to drop Blake again, setting up the Swanton from Cara to Murphy for the pin at 5:07.

Rating: B-. Those dives from the Dragons are just nuts and made the match that much better. This was in the classic power vs. speed mold and worked as well as you would have expected it to. Murphy and Blake have a future if they're allowed to get some more ring time. They've got a look and aren't bad in the ring which puts them ahead of a lot of teams.

The Vaudevillains applaud the Dragons but tell them to keep the titles polished.

NXT Title: Adrian Neville vs. Sami Zayn

Zayn is challenging and quickly flips Adrian down to send the champion into the corner. He does it again before avoiding some dropkicks and dropkicking Adrian out to the floor. Sami loads up a dive but backflips back in when Neville moves. The OLE chants start up as Sami holds the ropes open but Neville flips back in. Now it's the champ's turn for some rapid fire kicks and Sami is in trouble.

Back from a break with Neville holding a chinlock to slow things down.

Sami fights up but is pulled right back down into the same hold. Back up again with Sami nailing three clotheslines because that's the standard comeback anymore. The third puts Neville on the floor and now the flip dive connects. Back in and Sami hits the cross body but hurts himself on the impact. Adrian hits a quick standing shooting star for two but can't hook a powerbomb.

Sami gets back up and catches Neville on his shoulders for a BIG spinning powerbomb and two. Fans: "THAT WAS THREE!" Neville nails another kick but Sami ducks the second and rolls some Germans, capped off by a release half nelson suplex for two. The Helluva Kick is blocked by a kick to the face and the exploder is countered with a rollup for two more. Neville goes up for the Red Arrow but only hits mat to put both guys down. Adrian comes up holding his knee and Sami won't go for the Helluva Kick. The referee throws up the X so Sami goes to check on Adrian...and gets rolled up for the pin at 15:33.

Rating: B. They were starting to feel it here but it's clear that they're setting up another match down the line. I'm glad that this didn't come off like a full heel turn but rather Adrian continuing to do whatever it takes to retain the title while staying within the bounds of the rules. Sami is getting the title though and the match at Takeover (you know it's coming) is going to blow the roof off the place.

Sami is stunned as trainers check on Neville to end the show.

Overall Rating: B+. Two good matches and a nice debut from Balor are about as good as you can get out of an hour of wrestling. Sami's road getting stopped for a bit is a nice twist but you know Zayn vs. Neville is headlining the next special. This was an awesome show though and felt like a big one even though it only had one major match. Really good stuff.

Results

Hideo Itami/Finn Balor b. Tyson Kidd/Justin Gabriel – Top rope double stomp to Gabriel

Sasha Banks b. Alexa Bliss – Bank Statement

Lucha Dragons b. Wesley Blake/Buddy Murphy – Swanton bomb to Murphy

Adrian Neville b. Sami Zayn – Small package

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of 1997 WCW Monday Nitro Reviews at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00NPPH0WI>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

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

NXT – November 6, 2014: Indeed, This Is Awesome

NXT

Date: November 6, 2014

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Jason Albert, Alex Riley, Rich Brennan

It's a big night in NXT as we have two major stories to get to. First and foremost, Tyler Breeze is Sami Zayn's latest obstacle on his road to redemption. Breeze is one of the only guys that Sami has never beaten and tonight they square off in what might be a #1 contenders match. Other than that we get to find out who Hideo Itami has found to help him in his war with the Ascension. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Zayn's road to redemption. I like this story more every time I see it.

Opening sequence.

Sami Zayn vs. Tyler Breeze

Feeling out process to start with Tyler getting two off an early backslide. Sami flips out of an armbar and nails an atomic drop before taking Breeze into the corner. Tyler comes right back with some stomps in the corner before bulldogging him face first onto the middle buckle for two. We take a break and come back with Sami fighting out of a chinlock but eating an elbow. Back to the chinlock as the fans are chanting for Breeze.

Zayn fights up again but Tyler fights out of the Blue Thunder Bomb and drops Sami with a neckbreaker for two. Sami shoves him off the top rope but Tyler dropkicks him out of the air. The Koji Clutch is quickly broken and neither guy can hook a German suplex. A HUGE Supermodel Kick gets two on Sami and frustration is setting in. Breeze takes him into the corner but walks into the exploder suplex, followed by the Helluva Kick to give Sami the pin at 14:43.

Rating: B-. It's good but they weren't going to be able to live up to their Takeover match with the time they had. Sami getting a clean pin over Breeze is a big step for him and he looked all fired up throughout the match. They're doing a great job of making Sami look unstoppable leading up to the showdown but I'd like to see Adrian get in some big wins of his own. Good stuff here.

Neville isn't afraid of Sami because he can't win the big one.

Dash Wilder vs. Tyson Kidd

Wilder runs him over to start so Tyson begs off in the corner. Kidd unloads in the corner and catapults Wilder face first into the bottom turnbuckle. A kick to the back gets two and we hit the chinlock on Dash for awhile. Wilder finally gets up and nails a powerslam for two, only to get kicked in the head again. A Moss Covered Three Handled Family Credenza sets up the Sharpshooter to make Dash at 4:28.

Rating: D+. That chinlock took way up way too much time and it hurt whatever they were going to be able to do here. Wilder was being treated like a bigger deal than usual here, even though he only had limited

offense. This is the kind of stuff I'd like to see on Raw: let some of the guys that don't get much time show up on TV and have a quick match instead of doing star vs. star all the time.

Marcus Louis is completely insane and ranting like a crazy man. I didn't recognize him at first.

Sami Zayn says he feels like the Count of Monte Cristo by beating all of these people in a row. The road to redemption is more than just a tag line and he wants his shot at Neville next week.

Becky Lynch/Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte/Bayley

Bayley and Becky get things going with Bayley driving Lynch into the corner with aggression to start. Off to Banks who gets dropped with a clothesline and knee dropped for two. Charlotte and Becky come back in with the champ taking Lynch down in a cravate. We take a break and come back with Charlotte taking her back down with another cravate.

Charlotte talks trash to Sasha on the apron before whipping Lynch into the corner to knock Sasha to the floor. She spends too much time yelling at Banks though and gets nailed for two. Banks comes in now for a few shots and immediately tags back out. Charlotte comes right back and drops a knee on Lynch's head before bringing in Bayley. Lynch takes her into the corner and tags in Banks for some forearms to the back.

In an evil nod, Banks hooks Bayley in a figure four neck lock and drives her face first into the mat ala Charlotte. The heels take turns on Bayley until she finally suplexes Banks down for a breather. Sasha knocks Charlotte off the apron and gets rolled up, only to roll through on Bayley and grab the tights for the pin at 11:34.

Rating: C. This was about setting up two future matches and there's nothing wrong with that. I like Banks being more of a cowardly heel now as it fits her personality to show that she can win on her own but want everyone else to do it for her. Lynch continues to look like the biggest star in forever though and seems more than ready for the main roster.

Regal confirms Neville vs. Zayn for the title next week.

Here's the Ascension to call out Itami. They tried to be patient but Itami has done nothing but make threats. Get out here right now so we can finish this. Itami comes to the stage and is joined by....FINN BALOR! I believe the screen was originally supposed to say Prince Devitt and then turn into the new name but it just said Finn Balor (pronounced like valor). They charge the ring and destroy Ascension with a variety of kicks and knee shots as the fans chant THIS IS AWESOME and DREAM TEAM. Finn goes to the top for a double stomp to Konor's back to end the show. Finn looked AWESOME here and the fans ate him up.

Overall Rating: B. This show was a blast and proof of what you can get if you actually take your time to set something up. It has me wanting to see the next Takeover show because the card is going to be stacked with matches that are waiting for a blowoff. Something tells me we're not going to get a clean finish to the title match next week and there's nothing wrong with that. Really solid show this week Balor's debut being a highlight.

Results

Sami Zayn b. Tyler Breeze – Helluva Kick

Tyson Kidd b. Dash Wilder – Sharpshooter

Becky Lynch/Sasha Banks b. Charlotte/Bayley – Rollup to Bayley with a handful of tights

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of 1997 WCW Monday Nitro Reviews at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00NPPH0WI>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

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

NXT – October 30, 2014: Help! He Needs Somebody. Not Just Anybody.

NXT

Date: October 30, 2014

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Jason Albert, Renee Young, Rich Brennan

We're getting very close to the next big show and Sami's road to the title is on fire. Other than that the main story is Hideo Itami having to face the Ascension on his own which hasn't been working all that well for him. Things are starting to pick back up around here and it's made things much easier to get through. Let's get to it.

Sami says he hasn't won the big one yet but he's still on the road to redemption. Titus O'Neil comes in and says he's the next challenger on the way. They agree to a match, presumably tonight.

Opening sequence.

Tag Team Battle Royal

Vaudevillains, Colin Cassady/Enzo Amore, Ascension, Tye Dillinger/Jason Jordan, Buddy Murphy/Wesley Blake

Winners get a title shot and if one member is out, the whole team is out. It's the usual brawl to start with the Vaudevillains having to slide back under the ropes early on. Dillinger rips off a chop to Amore but Big Cass makes a save. We get back to the brawling with Gotch saving himself over and over. There aren't any eliminations yet and we're coming up on four minutes into the match. Blake/Murphy and Dillinger/Jordan are in trouble but the Ascension dumps all four guys at once.

The Vaudevillains bail to the floor, leaving Cassady and Amore to fight the monsters. Enzo jumps on Viktor's back and hammers away, only to walk into an STO. Cassady fights back as the Vaudevillains come back in. Well crawl to the apron at least. Enzo and Cass are thrown into each other for an elimination and here comes Hideo Itami to stand on the stage. The distraction lets the Vaudevillains dump the Ascension for the surprise win at 6:28.

Rating: C-. Eh it's a battle royal so what are you looking for here? The Vaudevillains are the best option here as they're over with the crowd and a unique act so why not give them the shot? Itami helping is a good idea and since it's been awhile since the last distraction win, the ending didn't make me roll my eyes as much.

Itami comes in after the match but gets laid out again. Konor tells him to go back to Japan or they'll send him back in a box.

Emma vs. Carmella

Carmella's line: "Bada bing, hottest chick in the ring." A quick rollup gets two on Emma but she drops down next to Carmella on an Irish whip. Carmella stomps away in the corner as the announcers suggest costumes for Albert. She stops to check her nails while choking Emma on the ropes (Albert: "Renee are they real?" Renee: "Uhhhhh.....") before putting on a bodyscissors. Emma blocks a kick and Carmella panics, allowing Emma to take over with clotheslines, followed by the Dilemma. The Emma Sandwich gets two but Carmella trips her up and puts on the crossface with her legs for the submission at 4:57.

Rating: C. Not bad here with Carmella being another decent character to help fill out the division. NXT's women's division is so much better than WWE's in terms of developing personalities for the girls. Yeah Carmella's character may be very stereotypical, but it's unique for the division and is something different than some chick that just happens to wrestle.

Bull Dempsey vs. Justin Gabriel

Apparently Dempsey didn't cry at the end of Old Yeller. Dempsey easily stomps away as someone tries to start a Sawyer Fulton chant for some

reason. A side slam gets two on Justin and Bull just hammers on the head. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Justin counters into a reverse DDT. A moonsault gets two for Justin but he dives into a backdrop, setting up a running Vader body attack. Bull's top rope headbutt gets the pin at 3:47.

Rating: D+. I'm getting a Bam Bam Bigelow vibe from Dempsey minus a lot of the high flying stuff. He's not great in the ring but he plays the role well enough and looks like a machine every time. He'll be a good dragon for someone like Sami to slay later on and that's all he needs to be.

Bayley says if Becky Lynch wants to bring Sasha, she'll bring Charlotte.

Baron Corbin vs. Tony Briggs

The NXT crowd's newest cool idea: counting the time before Corbin gets the pin at 18 seconds with End of Days. He's getting faster at it too.

Itami says he isn't leaving and will have a friend next week.

Marcus Louis vs. Sylvester LeFort

Louis isn't hiding the bald anymore and throws Sylvester down by the throat. LeFort tries to crawl away again but gets nailed with a clothesline. A release Rock Bottom ends Sylvester at 1:26. Louis came off like a killer here and kept shouting YOU DID THIS TO ME.

Titus O'Neil vs. Sami Zayn

Titus throws him around to start but Zayn comes back with some chops. They trade more chops in the corner until O'Neil plants him with a pair of backbreakers. We take a break and come back with Sami caught in a bearhug. Sami gets choked in the corner as Titus mocks the OLE chant. More chops have no effect on Titus as he just throws Sami down.

Sami gets tossed to the floor but Titus lets him get back in, only to do the same thing again. He tries it again but Sami hangs on and comes back in with a high cross body for two. A big boot and over the shoulder backbreaker get the same for Titus as frustration is starting to set in.

Back up and Sami grabs the exploder suplex in the corner followed by the Helluva Kick for the pin out of nowhere at 11:30.

Rating: C-. It's still not a good match but this was miles better than their first one because Sami got the win. Titus is still little more than a musclehead but I liked his talking to make him seem all the more arrogant. Nothing special here but it plays into the road to redemption story and gave the fans something to cheer for.

Post match Tyler Breeze comes out and says hang on a second. Sami doesn't get a title shot for beating a couple of uggos. If he wants the title shot, he has to beat the one person he's never beat. Regal has already made the match for next week.

Overall Rating: C. This was all about moving the stories forward and the depth they're reaching is great. Sami having to go back and avenge each of his losses is a great story and the rematch with Breeze could tear the house down. By this point I'm sure you know who Itami's friend is going to be and the reaction is going to blow the roof off. Not a great show this week but they have me wanting to see more. That's something I haven't been able to say about WWE in a long time.

Results

Vaudevillains won a tag team battle royal last eliminating Ascension

Carmella b. Emma – Leg Crossface

Bull Dempsey b. Justin Gabriel – Top rope headbutt

Baron Corbin b. Tony Briggs – End of Days

Marcus Louis b. Sylvester LeFort – Release Rock Bottom

Sami Zayn b. Titus O'Neil – Helluva Kick

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of 1997 WCW Monday Nitro Reviews at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00NPPH0WI>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

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

NXT – October 9, 2014: You Gotta Believe

NXT

Date: October 9, 2014

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Jason Albert, Renee Young, Rich Brennan

We're getting closer to the next live special and you can see the card starting to form from here. It's pretty clear that we're going to get Sami Zayn vs. Adrian Neville in the big showdown for the title and maybe Lucha Dragons vs. the Vaudevillains. That's not the worst card in the world with the NXT Title match sounding excellent. Let's get to it.

Tyler Breeze vs. Mojo Rawley

This is the result of Tyler attacking Mojo a few weeks ago when Rawley interrupted his walk. Breeze hides in the ropes to start and then lays on the corner to keep ticking Mojo off. Mojo charges into a boot to the shoulder and Breeze stomps on the arm before putting on a Fujiwara Armbar for the submission at 1:15. This quick losing thing has to become a story soon right?

Brennan thinks the referee stopped the match instead of hearing a submission.

Enzo and Cass try to get Regal to give Carmella a job. He isn't

interested but they get him to watch her working out in the ring. She makes some girl tap and Regal says bring her next Thursday.

We recap Hideo Itami vs. the Ascension over the last few weeks.

Viktor vs. Hideo Itami

Konor isn't anywhere in sight which probably doesn't spell anything good for Itami. Viktor takes some punches and kicks to start but rips the skin off Hideo's chest with a chop. A snap suplex gets two on Itami and Viktor hammers away even more. Some kicks give Hideo a breather and a missile dropkick puts Viktor down. Hideo seems staggered by the dropkick but he goes up again, only to be distracted by Konor on the stage with an unconscious Funaki. Not that it matters as Itami dropkicks Viktor for the pin at 3:11.

Rating: D+. Hideo looked better here but I still want to see some different offense. The dropkicks were at least a different kind of kick to keep things a little fresher and he threw some right hands, but throw in something other than strikes. Again though, it was just a three minute match so it's way too early to pass judgment. The crowd was oddly silent during this match too.

Post match Konor comes in and Hideo gets tied in the ropes. Funaki tries to make a save and gets beaten down even worse.

Vaudevillains vs. Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady

I'm not feeling the Vaudevillains' new music. Enzo wants the Villains to get back in their Delorean and go back to the future. They want to go back to Pumping Iron to flex like Arnold, but it's more like Hey Arnold because they never should have got off the stoop. WOW does that line make me feel old. Gotch drives knees into Enzo's ribs in the corner and Aiden's legdrop gets two. Enzo finally rolls away and makes the tag to Cass for a big boot. Everything breaks down and Cass suplexes Enzo onto Gotch for two. Cass gets knocked outside to leave Amore all alone and That's A Wrap at 2:52.

Sami Zayn understands that Titus O'Neil is having issues with a bunny but

that doesn't mean he can come down here to make himself feel better.

Becky Lynch vs. Sasha Banks

Becky is out of the green and into plaid. Sasha insults Becky's hair to start so Becky whips her hair into Banks' face. A Majistral cradle gets two for Lynch and she nips up for good measure. Some forearms to the face get two for Sasha and we're off to a double arm crank. Becky comes back with some clotheslines for two and a springboard kick to the face in the corner. Not that it matters as Sasha hits a quick Backstabber into the Bank Statement (Crossface) for the submission at 4:02.

Rating: C. This wasn't bad and Lynch clearly has the it factor to her. The fact that she's very good looking and can clearly go in the ring will make things even easier for her. I was hoping she won here but the Banks vs. Charlotte match is probably going to take place at the next live show. Good showing by Lynch here who looked more complete than Banks, though Sasha has better charisma.

Sami Zayn vs. Titus O'Neil

Sami fires off some forearms to stagger the big guy but charges into a slam. More forearms don't have much effect as Titus slowly hammers him down again. O'Neil pounds away in the corner and another slam gets two. Sami gets thrown outside and we take a break. Back with Sami caught in a bearhug and being swung around like a rag doll. A third slam gets two as Titus really doesn't seem to have the most extensive offense.

Zayn gets beaten down in the corner again and has to confirm he can keep going. Off to a waistlock from Titus but Sami fights out and low bridges Titus to the floor. A big flip dive puts O'Neil down and finally wakes up the crowd a bit. Back in and the Helluva Kick is countered by a big boot for two. A second attempt at the Helluva Kick connects but Titus' foot is under the ropes. Sami tries to walk the corner but gets crotched down and planted with the Clash of the Titus for the pin at 13:14.

Rating: D. Seriously? We have to sit through Titus having one of the most boring offenses this side of Big John Studd and he gets to pin Zayn in the middle of the ring? The bad parts of this match are all on Titus as

he just didn't have anything but slams, clotheslines and forearms. You would think a guy that has been around that many years would have something better than this but he was just dull. I see no need to have him win here though and it really made things worse.

Titus tries to go after Sami again but Neville makes the save.

Overall Rating: C-. This wasn't their best effort and the main event has a lot to do with it. I see no reason why Sami couldn't win here and then do the exact same ending. The rest of the show was fine but it's almost all about setting up stuff for down the road. The different with NXT though is they're capable of pulling off something like that later on. Not a great show here but there's good stuff coming.

Results

Tyler Breeze b. Mojo Rawley – Fujiwara Armbar

Hideo Itami b. Viktor – Dropkick

Vaudevillains b. Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady – That's A Wrap to Amore

Sasha Banks b. Becky Lynch – Crossface

Titus O'Neil b. Sami Zayn – Clash of the Titus

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of 1997 WCW Monday Nitro Reviews at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00NPPH0WI>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

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

NXT – September 18, 2014: Ah NXT, How I've Missed You

NXT

Date: September 18, 2014

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Renee Young, Rich Brennan, Alex Riley

We're past Takeover II now and the main story seems to have been Adrian Neville teasing a heel turn by pulling the referee out of the ring to retain his title. Other than that we saw the debut of Hideo Itami and what looks to be the start of a feud with former NXT Tag Team Champions the Ascension, who lost their belts to Sin Cara and Kalisto. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Takeover.

Opening sequence.

Here's Titus O'Neil as your WWE Superstar for this taping cycle. He tells the fans that they're lucky to be in his presence ("WE WANT DARREN!") and complains about people like Sami Zayn and Adrian Neville taking up his time on Raw last week. Now he's going to take up our time and just stay out here for awhile. Now this show will be called NXTITUS but here's Sami Zayn to cut him off.

Sami says we need someone like Titus here who can't win a match to save his life. While Titus is getting beaten up by a bunny, NXT is stealing the show. A fight is teased but here's Adrian Neville to interrupt. The champ says he's the man that stands up for NXT, but here's Tyson Kidd with something to say.

Kidd says it's a fact that Titus and Sami are both losers but at least Adrian is a champion. Tyson praises Adrian for doing what he did last week, which Sami says he's cool with. Titus cuts them off and says he's here to make a statement, but GM William Regal comes out and makes Titus/Tyson vs. Adrian/Sami for later. NXT does NOT need these long

talking segments to start the shows.

We look back at Hideo Itami debuting and taking out the Ascension.

Charlotte vs. Emma

Non-title and of course the fans welcome Emma back. Emma knocks the belt out of Charlotte's hand so the champ knocks her down and ties Emma up in the Figure Four headlock. She even mocks Emma's dance with the hold on. That's the kind of thing that elevates wrestlers just a step above the rest.

Emma rolls back for a cover and breaks the hold but Charlotte runs her over with a shoulder. The moonsault is broken up though and Emma grabs a rollup (after missing on the first try). A few running forearms drop Charlotte and there's the Emma Sandwich. Emma gets two off a high cross body but gets caught in a neckbreaker and Natural Selection gives Charlotte the pin at 4:10.

Rating: C-. This was sloppier than I was expecting but it continues to amaze me how much more polished these girls look than the regular WWE girls. They look like wrestlers who happen to be women instead of the Divas who are bad actresses who try to have a match every now and then. The fans don't seem to care about Emma anymore.

Justin Gabriel vs. Hideo Itami

Feeling out process to start until Hideo kicks him in the face to block a leapfrog. Gabriel bails to the floor and snaps Hideo's neck across the top rope to take over. Off to a double chickenwing but Itami fights out with strikes and even taunts Justin a bit. A running boot to the face and kick to the chest have Justin in trouble before a springboard kick to the ribs drops Gabriel. Itami mostly hits a top rope double stomp for the pin at 3:35.

Rating: D+. Oh I hope there's more to him than what I saw here. I know I'm going to get yelled at for this but I really do not care for wrestlers with such one dimensional offense. I don't think Hideo used anything but kicks here and that's going to get old in a hurry if it's

all he's doing. That being said, this was just a three and a half minute match so it's way too early to pass judgment on him yet. I haven't seen much of his Japan work so I don't know if this is what he's like most of the time, but I really hope not.

Post match Ascension comes out and destroys Itami with the Fall of Man.

CJ Parker vs. Baron Corbin

Baron looks to be a biker. Parker gets shoved into the corner and is dropped by a right hand. The same snap Downward Spiral, now called End of Days, takes out Parker at 34 seconds.

We look at Marcus Louis getting his hair removed last week.

The girl (Carmella) that gave Enzo and Big Cass the hair cream comes into the gym to yell at them for getting her fired. She wants a job as a fighter and smacks Enzo down to the floor. I like these videos where they take things out of the arena. It's a nice change of scenery even if it's something as basic as a gym.

Tyson Kidd/Titus O'Neil vs. Sami Zayn/Adrian Neville

Kidd and Sami get things going but it's off to Neville before there's any contact. Adrian jumps over Kidd in the corner and gets one off a hiptoss. Sami tags himself back in and hits Adrian's standing moonsault (Fans: "BETTER THAN NEVILLE!") for one of his own. Adrian comes back in and does a standing corkscrew moonsault onto Tyson's legs for two. Neville dropkicks Tyson to the floor but Sami tags himself in. The champ doesn't notice and loads up a dive but Sami hits a springboard moonsault to take Kidd out again as we take a break.

Back with Tyson driving Sami into the corner for the tag off to Titus. O'Neil hits two backbreakers in a row before just throwing Sami away. It's already back to Tyson who gets a TYSON CHICKEN chant. A chinlock slows things down a bit until Titus comes in with a hue uppercut. Off to an abdominal stretch before a hard slam drops Sami again.

A legdrop to the back of the head sends Zayn crawling for the corner where he avoids a charging Titus. The hot tag brings in Adrian to clean

house with kicks and a standing moonsault for two on Tyson. Everything breaks down and O'Neil breaks up the Red Arrow by shoving Adrian onto Tyson's knees, giving Kidd the pin at 11:30.

Rating: C+. Basic tag match here but you can see the seeds being planted for the eventual full heel turn by Adrian and the showdown with Sami. That story could take months to set up and the blowoff match could be a classic. Good match here though it was much more about setting stuff up for the future.

Sami is annoyed but says it's ok to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. This was a very basic but still entertaining show. They're clearly setting stuff up instead of focusing on what's going on right now and that's a smart move. It gives the fans a reason to come back, but the good thing is NXT can keep things interesting on the way to the big stuff later on. Corbin could be a big deal in the future, Carmella can restock the Divas division and Itami is going to be a main event player soon enough. Couple that with the build to Neville vs. Zayn and things are looking up again for NXT.

Results

Charlotte b. Emma – Natural Selection

Hideo Itami b. Justin Gabriel – Top rope double splash

Baron Corbin b. CJ Parker – End of Days

Tyson Kidd/Titus O'Neil b. Sami Zayn/Adrian Neville – Kidd pinned Neville after a missed Red Arrow