

Takeover: New Orleans – I Don't Believe It



IMG Credit: WWE

Takeover: New Orleans

Date: April 7, 2018

Location: Smoothie King Center, New Orleans, Louisiana

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Nigel McGuinness, Percy Watson

As is so often the case with Takeover, the card for this show looks incredible. As isn't so often the case with Takeover, Wrestlemania looks very good as well. I don't remember the last time WWE outdid NXT but maybe that can be the case tonight. You know, assuming NXT falls apart at one of these for the first time ever. Let's get to it.

[Here's the go home show if you need a recap.](#)

I was in the arena for this show, sitting in the lower bowl on the hard camera side with the ring on my left.

We open with the lights off and a few glow sticks in the air. There were supposed to be far more as Mike Rome announced that everyone should have gotten some. A WE WANT GLOW STICKS chant broke out and the scene really isn't as good as it should have been. Anyway, Cane Hill performs a heck of a theme song with It Follows. This was great and a solid way to open the show, especially rather than doing the performance in the middle of the show.

North American Title: Ricochet vs. EC3 vs. Adam Cole vs. Killian Dain vs. Lars Sullivan vs. Velveteen Dream

Ladder match for the inaugural title with Ricochet and EC3 (who is still said to be coming from a rich family) making their in-ring debuts. Cole is the heavy crowd favorite with Ricochet a close second but anyone is a potential winner. The fans declare this awesome before the opening bell, and can you really blame them?

EC3 bails to the floor and it's Dain/Sullivan clearing the ring for the big showdown. The two of them head outside as well, leaving Ricochet to springboard into a shooting star press to drop them in short order. Now that we're a minute into the match, it's time to go for the first ladder but Dream pulls Ricochet down. Back in and Ricochet moonsaults into a headscissors before snapping off a dropkick. He's already one of the smoothest high fliers you'll ever see in NXT and this is a heck of a first impression.

Cole pulls Dream off the ladder, setting up the fireman's carry neckbreaker. EC3 comes in but Sullivan and Dain are right back to clean house. Dain suicide dives onto Sullivan (because a man his size can just do that) and picks up EC3 and Ricochet at the same time. Cole makes the save but Sullivan throws a ladder at everyone else to clear the ring. It's time to hammer away with said ladder, including the Terry Funk ladder around the head to swing away. I've missed that spot.

Dream gets dropped ribs first onto the ladder and it's time for Sullivan to climb. That's actually booed out of the building, which really surprised me. Ricochet, EC3 and Dream powerbomb him off the ladder but Dain pulls Cole off the ladder. Dain backdrops Ricochet onto a ladder in the corner and it's time for EC3 and Cole to team up for some house cleaning. They bridge a ladder from the announcers' table to the apron and there's no way this could end well.

Back in and EC3 does Cole's pose, earning himself a trip into the ladder as well. Superkicks abound and Cole shows us how to really do the pose. Dream comes in with some Purple Rainmakers, including one to Ricochet after the referee moves the ladder. Sullivan and Dream are left alone

with Lars charging into a ladder shot....and it's time to climb the big ladder. In the spot of the match (so far), Dream drops the HUGE Purple Rainmaker (getting ABOVE THE TITLE), possibly breaking everything in the process.

EC3 is up with a powerbomb to put Dream onto the ladder though and it's time for another climb. This time it's Cole making the save, earning himself a TK3 (TK0) off the ladder for a huge crash. The fans declare this awesome (perceptive crowd) as Dain gets up and crushes EC3 with a Vader Bomb onto a ladder onto EC3. Dain loads up another one, but this time Cole jumps on his back. That means a DOUBLE VADER BOMB onto the ladder onto EC3. A quick look into EC3's mind likely sees him screaming "I LEFT IMPACT FOR THIS???"

Ricochet breaks up another Sullivan vs. Dain fight but Sullivan throws him across the ring. Dain picks him up (Fans: "THROW HIM BACK!") and does just what the fans want, meaning it's the big slugout at last. Sullivan plants him and goes up with Ricochet making the save. Ricochet goes up but the ladder is shoved over....so he MOONSAULTS OFF AS IT GOES DOWN, taking out Dain and Cole in the process. I don't even know how you do that but he pulled it off like a good Kentucky boy.

EC3 chops Ricochet in the ring but gets kicked down, setting up a shooting star onto the ladder. Dream FINALLY comes back in (after spending a long time being attended to on the floor thanks to being busted open earlier) and is promptly punched in the face. A ladder is bridged between the standing ladder and the corner so Dream hits the rolling Death Valley Driver to drive Ricochet onto but not through the bridge. Egads that was a scary looking one, but compared to everything else in the match it was almost tame. That's nuts.

We haven't had carnage in all of ten seconds so Sullivan puts Dream on the bridged ladder outside the ring and gives EC3 a Freak Accident through Dream through the ladder. Mauro absolutely loses his mind (again) and the three of them are dead. I'm not sure why Sullivan is but that's WWE for you. Dain isn't about to be outdone and puts Ricochet on another bridged ladder and hits a World's Strongest Slam on Cole, driving him through Ricochet to put all six down at once.

The fans want them to fight forever but settle for Sullivan and Dain climbing the ladder inside. EC3 slows them down with some ladder shots to the ribs and climbs another with Cole going up the other side. Of course Dream and Ricochet climb their own ladder, putting all six up on ladders at the same time. Cole gets knocked off but climbs back up to grab a Russian legsweep on EC3.

Dream touches the title but Ricochet neckbreakers him down as well. A Freak Accident brings Dain down as well and all six are on the mat again. Sullivan, with blood coming down the side of his face, goes up but Ricochet springboards up and lands on his back, breaking one of the ladders in the process to put everyone down again. Cole turns the ladder over and gets the title for the win at 31:25.

Rating: A+. Like this could possibly get anything else. There are matches where they have a major story going on and all kinds of stories tied in at the same time. Then there are matches with so much carnage and violence with near title grabs and crazy spots. This would be the latter and my goodness it was incredible. These six guys left EVERYTHING they had in the ring and there was so much stuff that made your eyes bug out. It also helps that the match was a complete pick em coming in, making this one of the best ladder matches I've ever seen. Watch this as soon as you can.

Andrade Cien Almas and Zelina Vega are in the back. Not exactly noteworthy but this cut off in the arena.

We recap Shayna Baszler vs. Ember Moon. Baszler has run roughshod over the division so far but got caught in a quick fall against Moon. Baszler talked about ignoring the system and getting exactly what she wanted in the process. She got underneath Ember's skin and Ember challenged her to another match. Tonight is the rematch with Baszler a little more experienced and ready to take the title.

Ronda Rousey and Jessamyn Duke are in the front row (in the same spot as all other guests tonight) to cheer Baszler on.

Women's Title: Ember Moon vs. Shayna Baszler

Moon is defending and gets played to the ring. It's not bad but pales in comparison to the pretty awesome opening song. Moon misses a charge at the bell and gets punched right in the face. They head outside early on with Moon sanding her into the steps, followed by a middle rope Codebreaker for two back inside. Baszler catches a kick from the apron though and sends Moon face first instead.

Back in and the chinlock doesn't last long, allowing Moon to get in a hard palm strike. They're certainly going back and forth here and that's not the worst idea in the world. A knee to the face gives Baszler two but her rear naked choke is countered as Moon drops her down onto the mat for a break. Baszler steps on her hand and loads up a big stomp but Moon switches places (like a magician) and stomps on Baszler's arm instead.

Shayna is in real trouble as her arm is hanging there but catches Moon on top and kicks her in the face. With Moon down, Baszler RAMS HER OWN SHOULDER INTO THE POST to pop it back into socket. Well that certainly....works? I think? Baszler rolls outside and gets caught with the Eclipse (Moon is going to shatter her tailbone one day) to the floor. Moon can't follow up so Baszler grabs the Kirafuta Clutch back inside before switching into a triangle choke.

That's broken up by a powerbomb for two and Moon is either shocked by the pain or the near fall. The second Eclipse is countered into another Kirafuta Clutch (first time it's been countered) with one arm (didn't notice that live). Ember goes for the ropes and fights for a very long time, even cranking on the bad arm, before eventually collapsing, giving Baszler the title at 12:55.

Rating: B. There was a story being told here with Moon being angered to the point of trying to play Baszler's game instead of going with what brought her to the dance. Baszler had also studied the Eclipse since last time and was ready for it this time around, allowing her to catch Moon and win the title. It was a heck of a fight with Moon trying, but there was no doubt that Baszler was getting the title here. Throw in the spot on the card (this was the only thing that could have followed the ladder match) and this was a rousing success.

Baszler celebrates with Rousey and Duke.

Paige introduces us to a clip from the movie about her family. I saw this so many times over the weekend that I've almost memorized Rock's joke.

Adam Cole isn't sure he can wrestle the Tag Team Title match. This also cut off early in the arena.

We recap the Tag Team Title match/Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic final. The Undisputed Era interfered in the final so it was turned into a triple threat for both the trophy and the titles. Adam Cole is filling in for the injured Bobby Fish as William Regal continues to stick it to the Undisputed Era.

Tag Team Titles/Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic Finals: Roderick Strong/Pete Dunne vs. Authors of Pain vs. Undisputed Era

The Era is defending (and challenging for the trophy at the same time). The Authors won the tournament two years ago (the most recent edition) and Strong and Dunne have been thrown together. Cole is heavily taped up and the Authors waste no time in slugging away to take over. They send Cole outside for a double powerbomb through the announcers' table for a huge crash as we're still not even two minutes in.

O'Reilly dives off the apron with a knee to Razar as reality has struck him very quickly. Back in and Dunne goes for O'Reilly's arm but Kyle is more than capable of escaping. Strong is up with a backbreaker to Kyle and a running knee to Akum. O'Reilly grabs a guillotine to slow Strong down before switching to a triangle choke. Since that's not enough, Kyle grabs an ankle lock on Akum at the same time. Razar is back up though and powerbombs Dunne onto the pile for the big break.

Everyone else is cleared out so Razar grabs a choke on Strong as this actually turns into a tag match. I'm as shocked as you are. Kyle comes in but walks into a German suplex. He pops up with a shout...and then collapses to the floor in a funny bit. Strong finally kicks him away and it's off to Dunne with the hot tag. Dunne flips over Kyle and kicks him in the back (with O'Reilly pretty clearly sitting there waiting on it, even looking over his shoulder for the contact).

Dunne and O'Reilly slug it out until the Authors hit the Last Chapter on O'Reilly. Strong makes the save at two but Dunne breaks Razar's fingers. A belly to back drops Kyle onto the apron, leaving Razar to take the assisted Bitter End. Back in and the Bitter End plants Kyle...but Strong breaks up the cover at two. End of Heartache plants Dunne and Strong puts Kyle on top to retain the titles at 11:43.

Rating: B. Not the best match in the world but my goodness that was the right call. Strong just was not working on his own and having him join the Undisputed Era is the best fit for him. He won't have to talk and O'Reilly needs a new partner with Fish out injured. This was another wild brawl and I'm glad they didn't bother wasting time trying to have a match. Sometimes it's just not needed and that was the case here.

Post match Strong takes Cole's armband and puts it on to officially join the group. The trio heads up to the trophy with Fish joining them, meaning they won a tournament they weren't even in (notice Vince Russo frantically scribbling things down).

Of note, Goldust and Jeff Jarrett were watching this from the front row. Shane McMahon was on the hard camera side (at least from before this match on) and ran over to hug them during a video package.

Nita Strauss is here.

We recap the NXT Title match, meaning Gargano vs. Ciampa is in its rightful main event slot. Aleister Black wants the NXT Title and has yet to be pinned in a singles match. Andrade Cien Almas, with manager Zelina Vega, has rocketed up the charts and become a heck of a champion in his own right. I could see this one going either way, which isn't often the case in the title matches.

NXT Title: Andrade Cien Almas vs. Aleister Black

Black is challenging and misses a running boot at the bell. Instead he goes with strikes anywhere he can hit them to put Almas on the floor. The moonsault into the seated position doesn't rotate enough so he lands on his stomach, only to pop up and moonsault onto the floor to take Almas down again. Some right hands have Almas on the run but Vega hits a

hurricanrana off the apron to send Black into the steps. I'm not sure how the referee couldn't see that but wrestling is funny that way.

Back in and Almas stomps away (Mauro: "Nothing tranquilo about the champion tonight.") before sending Black shoulder first into the post. The fans are split as Almas gets a backbreaker out of the corner for two and it's off to a chinlock with an arm crank. Back up and Black knees Almas out of the air and both guys are down. A Lionsault gives Black two more and the fans sounded like they were into the knockout.

Almas avoids a charge though and snaps off a German suplex, only to miss a moonsault...and then land on his feet and moonsault onto Black for two anyway. Cool spot. Almas elbows him in the head for one so Black knees...the air near Almas' head for two. Thankfully Mauro acknowledges that he didn't get all of it because that looked rather bad. Stereo kicks to the head means a double knockdown and the referee gets to eight.

Almas kicks him outside for a springboard corkscrew plancha but still can't put Black away. That means it's time to bring in the belt as a distraction so Vega can hit another hurricanrana with Black going head first into the mat. Back up and Black Mass hits out of nowhere with Vega putting the foot on the ropes. The heat is strong with this one.

Vega interferes for a FOURTH TIME with a distraction allowing Almas to crotch Black on the ropes. The Alberto Del Rio double stomp connects, thankfully not driving Black down to the apron in the process. Almas scores with the running knees in the corner for a VERY close two and Vega is panicking on the floor.

Black Mass is countered with a dropkick to the back and it's out to the apron again, this time with the running knees driving Black into the post. Black sends him outside but a quick hammerlock DDT...gets two? Vega has had enough and goes up top, only to get caught by Almas instead. The opening lets Black Mass knock Almas silly for the pin and the title at 18:20.

Rating: A-. I know Johnny Gargano is getting all the praise, but these two deserve some serious consideration for Wrestler of the Year at this point. They just tore the house down and if not for the opener, this

would have stolen the show so far. Vega was a great addition here and the ending makes perfect sense: Almas got where he is with Vega's help and her interference became his downfall. Great match here and I can see why they went with Black, as he's on fire right now.

We recap Gargano vs. Ciampa, which is nearly a year in the making. They've been friends for years and came to NXT as a tag team. After rising all the way to the Tag Team Titles, they came crashing back down, followed by Ciampa tearing his ACL. Ciampa accused Gargano of making the team all about himself even though Ciampa was carrying it. With Ciampa out, Gargano tried to get back to his peak but Ciampa was always in the back of his mind.

Then Ciampa cost him his NXT career, sending Gargano into a rage against Ciampa, stalking him at the Performance Center and even at his house. Ciampa went to William Regal to get rid of Gargano, setting up tonight's unsanctioned match. If Gargano loses, he's gone forever. If he wins though, he's back in NXT. This is an INCREDIBLE build to the point where everyone wants to see Gargano kill Ciampa after everything he's done but Ciampa looks that dangerous. In other words, this is the main event, full stop.

Johnny Gargano vs. Tommaso Ciampa

Anything goes and the referee isn't in his regular gear because this isn't sanctioned. Ciampa nails the entrance, slowly walking out with no music and just soaking in the utter hatred from the crowd. This is Ciampa's first match since May and he looks absolutely chiseled. The place goes nuts for Johnny but it's not as strong as the hatred for Ciampa. His entrance was just great stuff but it's all working anyway.

They stare each other down to start and it's time for the slugout with Gargano getting the better of it (of course). The slingshot spear cuts Ciampa in half and more left hands have him in trouble. Gargano stomps away in the corner as this is ALL Johnny to start with the fans loving him more every time he hurts Ciampa. A clothesline puts Ciampa on the floor for a suicide dive, followed by a trip over the barricade. Johnny dives onto him but gets dropped ribs first onto the barricade.

Back at ringside and Ciampa goes VERY old school by pulling back the floor mats. I haven't seen that one in a long time. Gargano throws him over the announcers' table and takes Mauro off headset in the process. Don't worry though as the fans are right there with the MAMA MIA chant to make up for it. Ciampa isn't done yet though as he grabs a suplex off the table to the floor (SICK thud) and they're both down again. These guys are beating the heck out of each other and the hatred is awesome so far.

In a unique spot, Ciampa picks up the top of the table and suplexes Gargano through it, breaking the wood in the process. Back in and Ciampa rips at Johnny's face before stomping on the hands. The fans aren't letting up on Ciampa a bit here, even as he sends Gargano hard into the corner. A Texas Cloverleaf starts on Johnny's leg for a change of pace and the rope break DOESN'T COUNT BECAUSE NXT IS ACTUALLY SMART WITH THIS STUFF. It always drives me crazy when that breaks a hold in a No DQ match and thankfully NXT got it right.

Johnny crawls to the apron for the break so Ciampa stomps him down and applauds the crowd. The fans refer to Ciampa by a rather mean term (in England at least) and he makes it worse by STEALING A FAN'S CRUTCHES. I mean, the fan was placed there before the match but still, great visual. Johnny takes it away though and knocks Ciampa silly, followed by a kick to the head for a double knockdown. The slingshot DDT onto the apron is broken up so Gargano POWERBOMBS HIM ONTO THE CONCRETE. Fans: "YOU DESERVE IT!" I almost lost it at that chant.

Back in (since Ciampa is somehow not dead), they both grab the crutch in the middle of the ring with Gargano coming away with it. Some HARD shots to the ribs and knee set up the slingshot DDT for two. The middle turnbuckle pad is taken off but Ciampa gets two off a torture rack powerbomb. With Johnny on his knees, Ciampa does the DIY pose and hits a running knee to the back of the head for two more. Now the fans want tables, because this brawl isn't enough for them or something.

They slug it out with neither getting the better of it until a clothesline drops Gargano. A reverse hurricanrana doesn't quite work as Ciampa lands on Gargano's back but the Gargano Escape goes on anyway. Ciampa makes the ropes to no avail so he goes to the eyes for the real

escape. With wrestling not working, Ciampa takes off the wrist tape but Gargano grabs onto it and they slug it out while joined together by the tape. Nice visual there. Ciampa gets out punched so it's a low blow and crutch to the back.

Project Ciampa (powerbomb into double knees to the back) gets two more but Gargano is back with two superkicks, followed by the DIY superkick for a red hot near fall. They head up top for a change of pace and a super Project Ciampa...gets two. I had bet on that as the finish, especially with Ciampa banging up his knee even more in the process. Ciampa takes the knee brace off but Gargano picks it up and hits him in the knee with it instead.

Now he picks up the other crutch (which the referee had placed in the ring) but stops as Ciampa begs off (ala what Ciampa did to Gargano in the Cruiserweight Classic). Ciampa grabs the brace and swings away, only to get pulled into the Gargano Escape. Gargano gets the brace and wraps it around Ciampa's face for an STF and the tap at 37:00.

Rating: A+. Of course that's what it gets. This match was built up like nothing else has been in NXT and they hit every possible point they could have done here. It was incredibly entertaining and one of the hardest hitting fights I've seen in a long time. The symbolism at the end was great and called back to almost every major point that these two have had since coming to WWE. Gargano winning to put Ciampa away (I can't imagine there won't be a rematch) for now was the right call, but I really wasn't sure at times. Incredible match as Gargano's outstanding runs continues.

Candice LeRae runs out for the celebration. This went on for a long time, even after the show ended. The pair eventually went up the ramp to pose, only to have Johnny look over his shoulder to make sure Ciampa wasn't back. One more pose ended the night.

Overall Rating: A+. I knew this was going to be great but I didn't know it was going to be this. We had one of the best pair of opening and closing matches that I've ever seen, an any other show stealing classic NXT Title change and two other matches that were very good in their own right. Somehow this topped Dallas as the best show I've ever seen and is

probably the best Takeover of all time. Incredible night here and something they're going to have to work hard to top, if they even can (which I would have said about their other top efforts as well, though it happened here too). Watch this as soon as possible.

Results

Adam Cole b. Lars Sullivan, Killian Dain, Velveteen Dream, Ricochet and EC3 – Cole pulled down the title

Shayna Baszler b. Ember Moon – Kirafuta Clutch

Undisputed Era b. Authors of Pain and Roderick Strong/Pete Dunne – End of Heartache to Dunne

Aleister Black b. Andrade Cien Almas – Black Mass

Johnny Gargano b. Tommaso Ciampa – STF

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NXT – April 4, 2018: NXT Needs a Hero



IMG Credit: WWE

NXT

Date: April 4, 2018

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Nigel McGuinness, Percy Watson

It's the final show before the big night in New Orleans and as usual, things continue to change around here. Last week saw the announcement of the six man ladder match for the North American Title and this week we have the finals of the Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic. Things are picking up at the right time so let's get to it.

[Here are last week's results if you need a recap.](#)

We open with a video package on the Dusty Classic with various big names (Terry Taylor is included so take this with a grain of salt) showing up to watch the finals. Bobby Fish's knee injury is confirmed for the first time on NXT TV though and he is NOT currently cleared.

Opening sequence.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic Finals: Authors of Pain vs. Roderick Strong/Pete Dunne

After the Big Match Intros, Strong is sent straight into the corner so the Authors can start the beating early. It's off to Dunne and the fans are VERY pleased as we take an early break. Back with Dunne in trouble with a hard knee to the ribs cutting him off. Akum comes in for a knee to the chest of his own and Dunne is rocked. The top rope stomp/side slam gets two on Dunne but he snaps Akum's finger and grabs a faceplant for the tag off to Strong.

Akum gets knocked off the apron and some kicks to Razar's head give Strong two. Dunne comes in for a running enziguri in the corner and top rope double stomp to the back gets two more. Akum is back in and Razar is low bridged to the floor. The assisted Bitter End gets two with Razar making the save but the Authors just run them over with raw power. Everyone is down and here's the Undisputed Era for the double DQ at 11:53.

Rating: B. The ending feels like storyline advancement and that's fine, though the match was rocking by the end. Dunne and Strong work well together and the Authors are great giants to slay. You can feel the triple threat coming because that's how anything WWE related works, but at least the match was good to set it up.

Post match here's William Regal to make the triple threat because champions attacking both challengers NEVER WORKS. As a bonus, the winners will also win the Dusty Classic.

We recap the ladder match announcement.

All six participants are ready to win the title. These are just quick sound bytes about how they should win but at least all six of them are getting TV time.

Long video on the rise and fall of DIY, leading to Tommaso Ciampa turning on Johnny Gargano. After rehabbing his torn ACL, Ciampa came back and screwed Gargano over, forcing him out of NXT. That set up Saturday's grudge match, which has been built up for nearly a year. Ciampa said he carried the team but it was always about Gargano. For the first time, this is Ciampa's moment. As usual, this was an excellent video to recap the whole thing and make you want to see the match.

Kairi Sane vs. Vanessa Bourne

Bourne goes simple by stomping on Kairi's foot, only to get rolled up for a few near falls. A flapjack works a bit better for Bourne and she sends Kairi face first into the buckles over and over. Sane cuts her in half with a spear and the sliding lariat in the corner keeps Bourne in trouble. A top rope forearm looks to up the Insane Elbow but Bourne catches her on top. That just earns her the Alberto Del Rio double stomp and the Insane Elbow is good for the pin on Bourne at 4:17.

Rating: D+. Not quite a squash but Sane got in all of her major stuff and wins clean over a game opponent. There's a good chance that we'll get Sane vs. Baszler for the title at whatever the next Takeover is and that's a very good thing. Sane certainly has the star power and look to make such a run work and the history with Baszler is already there.

Lacey Evans has shown us what a strong woman is capable of and doesn't like Nikki Cross. She doesn't like that complete psychos are getting chances instead of her. Evans doesn't think much of the rest of the division either but plans to take Sane's chance.

The Undisputed Era catches up with Regal (How hard can he be to find?) with Cole yelling about having to compete twice. Regal says there are three options: Cole wrestles twice, O'Reilly defends the titles on his own, or Cole drops out of the ladder match. None seem agreeable.

Video on Aleister Black vs. Andrade Cien Almas. Black says Almas is buying into his own hype and needs to get the monkey off his back by winning the NXT Title. Zelina Vega says there's a monster in Almas that Black will soon meet.

We look back at Shayna Baszler and Ember Moon brawling last week. Thankfully TM61 isn't cut off in mid promo this time.

Moon promises to end the war that Baszler started.

Next week: Kairi Sane vs. Lacey Evans.

Lars Sullivan vs. Killian Dain

They do the big shove off to start with Sullivan getting the better of it and knocking Dain out to the floor. Back from a break with Dain getting his neck cranked. That's broken up and a backslash sets up a Vader Bomb, which hits Sullivan's raised knees. Lars goes up top with Dain trying a superplex but a headbutt knocks them both to the floor instead. With everyone down, here are Velveteen Dream, Adam Cole and EC3 for the staredown. Ricochet runs in and moonsaults into his pose as we'll say the match is thrown out at 5:30.

Rating: C. This is a hard one to rate as they were there for the sake of beating each other up for a few minutes until all the run-ins started. As a way to set up the ladder match this was fine, but it wasn't supposed to be any kind of a definitive match. I'm sure we'll see these two have a longer match in the future, as they should.

A big staredown ends the show.

Overall Rating: B-. Most of that is for the video packages alone, as NXT knocked them out of the park yet again. The main thing here was they made Takeover look awesome and there's even the issue of what Cole will do on Sunday about having to wrestle in two matches. The wrestling wasn't the point here and now I'm wanting to see where things go on Sunday. Good stuff.

Results

Authors of Pain vs. Pete Dunne/Roderick Strong went to a double DQ when Undisputed Era interfered

Kairi Sane b. Vanessa Bourne – Insane Elbow

Lars Sullivan vs. Killian Dain went to a no contest when EC3, Ricochet, Adam Cole and Velveteen Dream interfered

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NXT – March 7, 2018: Ain't That A Kick In The Head



IMG Credit: WWE

NXT

Date: March 7, 2018

Location: Center Stage Theater, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Nigel McGuinness, Mauro Ranallo, Percy Watson

It's tournament time! Just in case two tournaments going on at the same time wasn't enough, tonight we start the third Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic. This time, the winners will be challenging for the NXT Tag Team Titles at Takeover: New Orleans. Other than that we need to start building to the rest of that show so let's get to it.

[Here's last week's review if you need a recap.](#)

We open with a look at the tournament, accompanied by Dusty Rhodes' iconic theme song.

Opening sequence.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic First Round: Authors of Pain vs. TM61

Rematch of the 2016 finals where the Authors won the whole thing. Razar and Thorn start things off with the former throwing Shane into the corner and driving some shoulders into the ribs. The fans are behind TM61 and a flapjack doesn't really slow down the cheering. Thorn gets driven into the corner and brings Miller in for a double Russian legsweep. The Authors bail to the floor for a bit so Thorn is right there with the big flip dive over the ropes. Now that's a Dusty move if I've ever seen one.

Back in and Akum shrugs off the right hands to the face and drives Miller HARD into the corner. We take a break and come back with Razar continuing to pummel Miller with hard shots to the head. A cobra clutch keeps Miller down until a DDT gets him out of trouble. The hot tag brings in Thorn for a clothesline and dropkick to finally drop Razar.

One heck of a Falcon Arrow gets two but Razar kicks Thorn's head off to take him down. A powerbomb/neckbreaker combination gets two but Miller and Thorn slip out of stereo Death Valley Drivers. Miller gets two off Blue Vengeance (moonsault) with Akum making the save. Akum powerbombs Thorn over the top and ONTO THE APRON for a sick landing. The Last Chapter ends Miller at 11:02.

Rating: B. These guys beat the heck out of each other and while I'm kind of surprised that TM61 is out so soon, I'm also glad that the Authors are moving forward. I don't think they win again but the team that beats them is going to look like giant killers. This was a very nice power vs. speed match and they beat the heck out of each other, especially with that powerbomb.

William Regal is talking to the press about the Dusty Classic but has to leave. Pete Dunne comes in and says the UK Title is staying in the UK. Roderick Strong pops in to ask for a rematch. Before Dunne answers, the Undisputed Era comes in to laugh at Strong for losing. Dunne brings up

Cole never winning anything, drawing Regal back over to ask if there's a problem. Apparently not.

Sanity says chaos rules everything and in this year's tournament, united they purge. Tonight, Killian Dain is ready to unleash chaos on Aleister Black.

Bianca Belair vs. Miss Drew Renee

Belair wastes no time in rolling some vertical suplexes and the Alley Oop is good for the pin at 1:21.

Lacey Evans wants to face Ember Moon next week but bails when Shayna Baszler comes in. Baszler knows Moon is a hypocrite for ignoring her for another week.

Heavy Machinery talks about being the good beef this year.

Here's Tommaso Ciampa with no music to be booed out of the arena. Much like Roman Reigns the night after last year's Wrestlemania, Ciampa is cut off every time he brings the microphone to his mouth. The WE WANT JOHNNY chants set Ciampa off and he throws the microphone down.

Ciampa slowly walks around the ring as the fans sing the Goodbye Song and then the DELETE chant. He takes a Gargano sign from a fan and rips it up (make sure to give the fan a gift so he doesn't go home sad) before beating on the pieces with his crutch. Ciampa leaves without saying a word. Really good segment here, especially considering Ciampa looks like an actual psycho half the time.

Next week: Cole vs. Dunne for the UK Title and two more first round matches.

Aleister Black vs. Killian Dain

Dain charges straight into the corner for a shotgun dropkick and a near fall. Black is right back up with kicks and knees to send Dain outside, followed by a big dive to take him out again. We take a break and come back with Dain running Black over and getting a delayed two. Dain grabs a seated abdominal stretch and adds a pair of splashes for two.

A slam doesn't work though as Black slips out and fires off the kicks to drop Dain. Black gets two off a standing Lionsault but gets clotheslined out of the air for two more. With Dain getting a bit too strong, Black goes simple by just kicking him in the head. That only earns Black a spinebuster and Vader Bomb for another near fall. Black gets two off a victory roll and catches Dain right in the face with Black Mass for the pin at 11:52.

Rating: B-. It wasn't the biggest surprise ending in the world but at least Black took a beating before coming back with Black Mass for the win. If he hits that on Almas to win the title, or even for a near fall before winning the title later, it's going to blow the roof off of New Orleans. Good match here though and Black gets one step closer to the title.

Overall Rating: B+. You can see things moving towards New Orleans now and that means a lot of good things, at least in theory. There's going to be a lot of good stuff taking place on that show and it makes for a lot of fun television on the way to the big show. Two good matches and a nice squash makes for a very solid 45 minutes of wrestling.

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NXT – February 28, 2018: Gone But Not Out Of His Contract



IMG Credit: WWE

NXT

Date: February 28, 2018

Location: Center Stage Theater, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Percy Watson, Nigel McGuinness, Mauro Ranallo

We're still closing in on Takeover: New Orleans but this time we'll be doing it without Johnny Gargano. Last week Gargano put his NXT career on the line for another shot at the NXT Title but former partner Tommaso Ciampa cost him the title with a crutch shot to the back. Now we need to figure out what's going on in New Orleans so let's get to it.

[Here's Last Week's Show](#)

We open with a recap of last week's title match with Gargano and wife Candice LeRae stared back at the ring in sadness as Ciampa looked at them in contempt.

Opening sequence.

Velveteen Dream vs. Tyler Bate

This should be good. Dream crawls away in reverse and the fans are split, albeit more for Dream than Bate. Tyler puts on a short form clinic by sliding between Dream's legs, jumping over him, and wristlocking Dream into a rollup for two. A dropkick has Dream livid on the floor as we take a break.

Back with Bate slipping out of a suplex but running into an elbow to the jaw. Dream gyrates a bit and grabs a reverse chinlock, followed by a reverse chinlock for good measure. Bate fights up and hits a running elbow in the corner for two as the pace picks up a bit. The airplane spin has Dream in trouble but he's still able to elbow his way out of the reverse version.

The Tyler Driver 97 is countered with a backdrop and one heck of a spinning spinebuster gives Dream two. They slug it out from their knees with Bate getting the better of it but Dream sends him hard into the buckle. Dream goes to the top but gets crotched. Bate is shoved down anyway and the Purple Rainmaker is good for the pin at 12:08.

Rating: B-. Bate is settling into the role of the bulletproof wrestler, which is about as bad of a spot as you can get. I can't remember the last time that he won a match and now he's stuck losing over and over again. That being said, he's still one of the most consistently strong performers around and it's almost always a good performance. Dream is on another level than almost anyone else right now though and I'd be surprised if he isn't NXT Champion by the end of the year.

Paul Ellering and the Authors of Pain want the Tag Team Titles back.

We see William Regal giving Gargano his termination papers, but Gargano will still be required to make media appearances and live events that he was already signed for. That sounds important. The referee admitted that he made a mistake and is sorry that he cost Gargano his career. Gargano seems to accept it.

Cezar Bononi vs. Adam Cole

Actually hang on a second as Cole grabs a mic and offers Bononi a spot on the team. O'Reilly throws him a shirt but it's a ruse so Cole can stomp

him down in the corner. Bononi is right back with a Michinoku Driver for two but another distraction lets Cole hit a superkick. A running knee to the back of the head ends Bononi at 2:55. Just a win to keep Cole hot until he gets a match at Takeover.

We recap Kairi Sane winning the Mae Young Classic by defeating Shayna Baszler, who has gone full villain since. Baszler has destroyed various people, typically by wrecking their arms. It seems that Baszler is on her way to the Women's Title but Sane is trying to slow her down.

The Street Profits interview people about the upcoming Dusty Classic. The first round starts next week.

Kairi Sane vs. Shayna Baszler

Sane hammers away to start but Shayna takes her down by the leg. Kairi is sent to the apron and Baszler starts in on the ribs to slow Sane down. A knee to the ribs takes us to a break with Sane in trouble. Back with Baszler getting two off a gutwrench suplex before starting on the arm.

The armbar is reversed into a rollup for two and Sane chops away in the corner. Sane gets a breather off a spear and the sliding knee in the corner has Baszler in trouble. A top rope forearm gives Sane two and a spinning backfist puts Baszler down again. It's too early for the Insane Elbow though as Baszler kicks her in the head, setting up the Kirifuda Clutch to make Sane tap at 7:22.

Rating: C+. This was exactly how the match should have gone: Baszler gets the win back and looks dominant in the process, showing that she is now better than Sane and can beat her in rather short order. The match should set Baszler up for the Women's Title match in New Orleans, where she needs to win the title in similarly dominant fashion.

Post match Baszler calls out Ember Moon, promising to leave with either the title or her limb.

Here are Andrade Cien Almas and Zelina Vega for a chat. Vega calls Almas Mr. 4-0 (over Gargano) and laughs about Gargano having his wife there for the last loss. Gargano was bragging about earning respect but Almas earns

MONEY. Almas talks about making Johnny Wrestling Johnny Jobless but Almas is still called the NXT Champion. They go to leave but Aleister Black cuts them off. Before Black can say anything though, here's Killian Dain for the brawl, including a running crossbody to take Black down and end the show.

Overall Rating: B. Well there's the next title match and they went out of their way to suggest that Gargano isn't quite gone yet. I'm starting to get excited for Takeover and that's a good sign with nearly six weeks left. The show could be a heck of a card and it's nice to have good TV setting us up on the way there. Throw in what should be the start of a good tournament next week and things are rolling.

Results

Velveteen Dream b. Tyler Bate – Purple Rainmaker

Adam Cole b. Cezar Bononi – Running knee to the back of the head

Shayna Baszler b. Kairi Sane – Kirifuda Clutch

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NXT – February 14, 2018: Roses Are Red, Violets Aren't Blue, OW MY ARM!

NXT

Date: February 14, 2018

Location: Center Stage Theater, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Nigel McGuinness, Percy Watson, Mauro Ranallo

We've got another packed show this week with two title matches on tap. First up the Women's Title is on the line as Ember Moon defends against Shayna Baszler in a rematch from Takeover: Philadelphia. After that, Pete Dunne defends the United Kingdom Title against Roderick Strong. Let's get to it.

We open with a quick preview of both title matches.

Opening sequence.

United Kingdom Title: Roderick Strong vs. Pete Dunne

Dunne is defending. Strong goes for a very early attempt at the Strong Hold but Dunne slips out as we take an early break. Back with Dunne twisting Strong's arm around in a very strange angle and kicking it hard. They head outside with more shots to the arm as Dunne is certainly focused so far.

Strong sends him into the barricade though and gets it back inside to take it to the mat. The first backbreaker gets two and the second sends Dunne into the corner for a stomping. They head up top where Dunne cranks on the arm again to get out of a superplex. That's fine with Strong who gets a fireman's carry to drop Dunne onto the barricade.

We take another break and come back with Dunne grabbing the arm again. This time he cranks it back ala Lucha Underground's Pentagon Dark, followed by a sitout powerbomb for two. A snap German suplex puts Strong down again but he dives into a dropkick to give Roderick two this -time.

Another backbreaker is countered into an exchange of rollups for two and both guys are down again.

Dunne scores with an enziguri for two and grabs a triangle choke, only to have Strong pull him throat first into the rope for the break. Strong takes him up top for a super Angle Slam and it's time for another Strong Hold. That's broken up with a snap of Strong's fingers though and the Bitter End retains the title at 21:12.

Rating: A-. Is Dunne capable of having a bad match? I really don't remember the last time that he's done anything less than great and a lot of that has to do with bringing in a completely different style mostly independent of the WWE training system. Strong looked great here, but at some point he has to actually win something. The great performances can carry him a long way, but he has to actually pull off a big win.

We look back at last week's outstanding segment with Johnny Gargano, Candice LeRae, Andrade Cien Almas and Zelina Vega. The title rematch is next week.

Velveteen Dream is ready for No Way Jose next week. He has no comment on wanting to face Tyler Bate.

Here's Aleister Black in a suit for a chat. Black's path has always lead him one way, starting with a sensation, left him in a dream and put him in the way of an era. The devil has been driving him and that devil is the NXT Championship. Cue Killian Dain to say the devil isn't on Black's back. Dain is the one on Black's back and wants the NXT Title as well. That means Dain has crossed Black though, and now he must fade to black. Aleister challenging for the title in New Orleans makes sense and this certainly feels like the first step toward that match.

TM61 vs. Andrew Duckworth/John Skyler

Thorn drives Skyler into the corner to start and takes Duckworth down with a suplex. A few shots to Thorn's knee get him into the corner though and trouble begins. It's over in very short order though as Thorn grabs a belly to back suplex. The hot tag brings in Miller to start cleaning house in short order. Thunder Valley ends Skyler at 2:12. Basically a

squash.

Women's Title: Shayna Baszler vs. Ember Moon

Moon is defending and wastes no time hammering Baszler up against the ropes. The step up enziguri and a pump kick to a kneeling Baszler have her in big trouble. It's too early for the Eclipse though as Baszler rolls to the floor, only to be taken down by a HARD suicide dive. Moon wrecks the bad arm though and the title is in big trouble. Back in and Baszler grabs a cross armbreaker but Moon is quickly in the ropes. They head outside again with Moon's arm getting caught in the barricade for more damage. Baszler is going off on the arm so here's Kairi Sane for the save and the DQ at 4:46.

Rating: D+. Just angle advancement here with Baszler continuing to the monster who doesn't play by the rules. She'll win the title, likely in New Orleans, and whoever gets to beat her can be the giant killer. It's a classic story (or one ripped off from Samoa Joe and AJ Styles in TNA) and it'll work very well here.

Sane clears the ring and checks on Moon to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. They've got some big stuff set up for the coming weeks and you can tell they're already looking towards New Orleans, which is less than two months away. Next week intrigues me though as you could go either way with Gargano winning and facing Black, who he's already pinned, in New Orleans or have Ciampa interfere and cost Gargano his NXT career. I'm sure they could find a way to get to the obvious grudge match though, and it's cool to have so many of these options available.

Results

Pete Dunne b. Roderick Strong – Bitter End

TM61 b. Andrew Duckworth/John Skyler – Thunder Valley to Skyler

Shayna Baszler b. Ember Moon via DQ when Kairi Sane interfered

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NXT – December 27, 2017: Johnny Cinderella

NXT

Date: December 27, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Nigel McGuinness, Percy Watson, Mauro Ranallo

I know I say this a lot but it's a big night around here. This time around we have the four way match for the #1 contendership to the NXT Title as Johnny Gargano, Lars Sullivan, Killian Dain and Aleister Black fight for a shot at Andrade Cien Almas. That should be a nice way to wrap up the year so let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Street Profits vs. Chris Star/Riley Apex

Those are some rather jobberish names. Ford and we'll say Star start things off with a shoulder dropping Chris. It's off to Dawkins for some rapid fire high fiving. A corner splash crushes Apex and it's the

spinebuster into a frog splash to give Ford the pin at 1:49. Total squash with the only noteworthy moment being Apex having a fitting description of NWO JBL.

The Profits hit the crowd and say they want the titles in 2018. It's not like they're getting anywhere else squashing jobbers so this works.

Women's Title: Sonya Deville vs. Ember Moon

Moon is defending. Deville goes straight for a kneebar but Moon is way too close to the ropes. Back up and they both miss some kicks to give us a standoff. A dropkick puts Deville on the floor for a breather as Moon is seemingly a bit hesitant to follow up. Moon speeds things back up with a dive off the apron to the floor and we take a break.

Back with Deville striking away and grabbing a waistlock. Moon finally sends her face first into the turnbuckle for a breather but can't follow up. Some hard strikes to the chest give Moon two more and a springboard dropkick has Deville in more trouble. The Eclipse retains the title at 10:03.

Rating: C. This was a nice first defense for Moon, especially when no one was buying a potential title change. The Eclipse is still one of the coolest finishers in wrestling and beating someone on the main roster is a good way to make Moon look all the more dominant. There are some big names coming for her though and there's no way around that.

Post match Kairi Sane comes out and motions that she wants the title. Moon agrees but Shayna Baszler sneaks in and chokes Sane out.

Paul Ellering says the Authors of Pain's time isn't over yet and they're coming for the titles.

Moon says bring on all the challengers.

Video on how everyone qualified for the four way.

Next week is a two hour Year in Review show.

In two weeks, Sanity gets their rematch for the Tag Team Titles.

Killian Dain vs. Aleister Black vs. Johnny Gargano vs. Lars Sullivan

One fall to a finish and the fans are WAY behind Gargano here. Black goes after Sullivan to start and a hard shot sends him outside. After moonsaulting into his seated position, Black moonsaults out onto Sullivan....who catches him. Dain takes Sullivan down with a suicide dive and we take a break.

Back with Black kicking Sullivan up the ramp but getting shoved into the barricade. Dain throws Gargano onto Black before loading up the announcers' table. Gargano climbs the set to escape a powerbomb and kicks Sullivan onto the table instead. Dain DIVES off the stage to crush Sullivan through the table and Gargano is stunned.

Black and Gargano head back to the ring and the fans REALLY like this one. The slingshot spear is countered with a hard knee to the head. One heck of a superkick staggers Black into the Gargano Escape but Dain comes in for the save. A backsplash gets two on Black and a powerbomb into an elbow is good for the same on Gargano. Dain heads up but it's a double powerbomb to pull him out of the corner for another big crash. Somehow Sullivan staggers back to the ring to clean house, including a powerslam for two on Gargano.

It's time for another big man showdown and back to back clotheslines put both guys down. Black comes back in and cleans house with the kicks including Black Mass to Sullivan, only to have the Undisputed Era come out to break up the pin. A Last Shot on the floor drops Black until Gargano dives onto Adam Cole. Gargano sends the monsters into the steps and the slingshot DDT gives Johnny the pin on Black at 16:40.

Rating: B+. That's a great way to have Gargano win and to close out the year at the same time. Gargano was basically done a few weeks ago and now he's risen back up the card to become a top player. If you have him ready to win the title and then have Ciampa return to screw him over, the whole thing is pure gold. The battle of the monsters was very good here too and there were multiple ways to go for the winner here. Really fun match though and Black vs. the Era could be very entertaining.

Overall Rating: B. This was a good way to wrap up the year and it was a

fun show as well. Taking next week off is fine too as there's only so much you can do with a lack of TV available. They've set some stuff up for the future, which is pretty much NXT's trademark at this point. Good show, very good main event and goals accomplished, which is really all you can ask for.

Results

Street Profits b. Chris Star/Riley Apex – Frog splash to Apex

Ember Moon b. Sonya Deville – Eclipse

Johnny Gargano b. Lars Sullivan, Aleister Black and Killian Dain – Slingshot DDT to Black

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KB's Review: Wrestling Prospectus

Who might be the stars of the future? Here are eleven of them. Why eleven? Eh no reason.

NXT – July 19, 2017: I'm Getting the Itch

NXT

Date: July 19, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Nigel McGuinness, Percy Watson

It's all about the NXT Title tonight as Drew McIntyre faces Killian Dane for the title shot at Takeover: Brooklyn. Bobby Roode suggested the match for the shot at his title, which would suggest than shenanigans are afoot. Other than that we're getting ready for the rest of the show, which is just a month away. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Ember Moon vs. Ruby Riot

The fans sound split here. Mauro asks Percy to give us the keys to victory for both of them. As you might expect, Watson has no idea and just says they both want to win. Thankfully Nigel is there to say it's all about the Eclipse as they trade some early rollups. Riot monkey flips her but Moon lands on her feet but takes her down again and grabs a chinlock. Ember reverses into a bow and arrow for a bit (which Percy manages to identify as a hold working on the back) but Riot is right back up to hit Ember in the face. A Flatliner drops Riot for two and we take a break.

Back with Riot hitting a top rope backplash for two but getting sent hard into the corner to change control again. Riot catches her on top with a hurricanrana though and the fans are WAY into this one. Ember goes

with a roaring elbow and a modified backbreaker, setting up the Eclipse to put Riot away at 11:35.

Rating: B. This match felt important instead of just another match. As has been the case, they continued to build up the Eclipse as the biggest move in NXT and probably the one move that can finish Asuka no matter what she throws at Ember. Riot definitely has a following too and she'll get her chance once things shift at the top of the division.

Earlier today Kassius Ohno was giving an interview when Hideo Itami came in to ask about their match next week, which Ohno requested. No violence ensues.

The Street Profits are coming.

Oney Lorcan vs. Danny Burch

Feeling out process to start with both guys getting an early two, only to have Burch punch him in the face to take over. Burch hits a dropkick and head kick in the corner, followed by the Tower of London (a hanging Diamond Cutter, Nigel's old finisher) for two. Lorcan gets in a shot to the face of his own and it's time to exchange some hard uppercuts. Danny turns him inside out with a clothesline and a rather sloppy powerbomb gets two. Back up and Danny misses a dive out of the corner and Lorcan rolls him into a half crab for the tap at 4:38.

Rating: C+. They were hitting the heck out of each other here and I like the idea that they have this kind of match on NXT from time to time. There isn't much of a story here but they hit each other really hard and offer entertaining enough matches to warrant time on the shows. Sometimes that's better than doing the same stuff over and over every week. Good little match here.

Danny shakes his hand post match and asks for one more match. Oney is game.

No Way Jose vs. Cezar Bononi

The fans sing about Jose and he scores with an early armdrag. Bononi takes him into the corner and gets in a good looking dropkick before

throwing Jose around. That goes nowhere though as Jose gets in a clothesline and some dancing, followed by the pop up uppercut for the pin at 2:09.

Post match Andrade Cien Almas comes in to go after Bononi (who upset him a few weeks back) but Jose chases him off.

Drew McIntyre vs. Killian Dain

The winner gets the title shot against Roode at Takeover: Brooklyn. It's odd to see Drew fighting someone bigger than he already is, which shows how small a lot of the NXT roster really is. Dain can't intimidate him to start and gets taken down by a top rope shot to the head. Killian is right back with a basement crossbody to send Drew outside though and we take a break.

Back with Drew still in trouble and getting tossed hard into the corner. Dain stomps on the chest and drops a running elbow for two. Some hard crossface shots to the jaw have Drew in trouble. We hit the neck crank for a bit before Dain hammers away in the corner, only to get caught in a running powerbomb to give Drew a near fall of his own.

White Noise gets two more, only to have Dain hit a quick Wasteland into a backsplash into a Vader Bomb (collectively named the Belfast Blitz). The Ulster Plantation is broken up and the referee tells them they have two minutes left. Dain takes him up again and grabs a fisherman's superplex for a delayed two but walks into Future Shock for one. Drew's shocked face is great and it's even worse when the Claymore (running boot to the face) isn't even enough for a cover. A second Claymore sends Drew to Brooklyn at 13:35.

Rating: B-. Well you can't say they didn't have Dain looking strong with that ending. This was another good, hard hitting brawl with two big guys beating the heck out of each other until Dain couldn't get up anymore. Drew winning is the right call and I wouldn't be surprised if he didn't win the title in Brooklyn as he's looking like one of the most polished performers in the promotion at the moment.

Drew says he's coming for the title to end the show.

Overall Rating: A-. The goal here was to set up a title match at Takeover and they nailed that as well as they could have. The show also had two very solid matches and a good brawl between Burch and Lorcan as a bonus. This was a very entertaining fifty one minutes of wrestling and I'm starting to get the itch for a Takeover, which has potential to be a very impressive show. Really good outing this week.

Results

Ember Moon b. Ruby Riot – Eclipse

Oney Lorcan b. Danny Burch – Half crab

No Way Jose b. Cezar Bononi – Pop up uppercut

Drew McIntyre b. Killian Dain – Claymore

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NXT – June 6, 2017: Good to Have You Back

NXT

Date: June 7, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Percy Watson, Tom Phillips, Nigel McGuinness

Tonight is, in theory at least, all about Bobby Roode, who promised to show up for a Championship Celebration. Then again he said the same thing last week and had more important things to do. Teasing the crowd like that is far more effective of a heel tactic than a lot of them you'll see so it's not the worst idea. Let's get to it.

We open with a quick video for tonight's two big matches.

Opening sequence.

Heavy Machinery vs. Victor Andrews/Lars Sullivan

We actually get an inset promo from the jobbers with Victor being worried about his partner but Lars saying he's got this. The huge Lars shoves Tucker into the corner to start and the shoulder blocks go nowhere. Knight actually gets taken down so it's off to the much smaller Andrews, who is quickly bearhugged. Tucker throws Andrews into another bearhug and a belly to belly. The double standing splash crushes Andrews again and the double fall away slam (the Compactor) is good for the pin at 3:54.

Rating: D+. Just a squash and there's nothing wrong with that. Sullivan continues to look great and is likely ready to be pushed at almost any time. I'm almost sure Heavy Machinery will be facing the Authors of Pain next in what could actually be an entertaining power feud. I don't think they'd change the titles but it could be a lot of fun.

Heavy Machinery leaves so Sullivan annihilates Andrews, including an over the shoulder backbreaker. Fans to Sullivan: "SAY YOU'RE SORRY!"

We look back at No Way Jose returning to save Roderick Strong and Kassius

Ohno from Sanity.

After the match, Killian Dain said no one was safe.

Here's Roderick Strong for a chat. Over the last year or so, he's been on quite the roller coaster (Was it the one at Wrestlemania?). Now he has a fiancée and a beautiful baby boy. Now all he needs is the NXT Title. It's no longer Roddy vs. the World because it's his family vs. the World. This brings out Bobby Roode to talk about what an emotional story that was. Strong has a lot going for him right now with a hot fiancée and a mostly normal boy.

Now Strong thinks he needs to move into the big house on the hill but it takes more than just asking for a title shot. Strong needs to stay in his lane and maybe one day they can take a picture together that he can show his kid. As for the title though, Strong just isn't man enough to win it. This was the first step on what feels like a long road to a match and that's fine.

Nikki Cross wants Asuka next week and gets her next week in a triple threat elimination match, also involving Ruby Riot.

Video on the Authors of Pain.

Sarah Logan vs. Peyton Royce

Logan is also known as Sarah Bridges but more famous as Crazy Mary Dobson. Sarah takes her down by the arm to start but Billie Kay's cheering gets Peyton out of trouble. A good looking spinning kick drops Logan and it's off to a chinlock. Logan fights up and hits a hard headbutt but gets kicked again, setting up a fisherman's suplex to give Royce the pin at 3:44.

Rating: D+. Just a quick squash here as they continue to not have much for Dobson to do. Granted the same could be said for Royce and Kaye, who have been the same characters in the same place for a long time now. Granted they're still good in those roles so it's hard to complain about something that's working.

After losing to Cesar Bonani last week, Andrade Cien Almas went out on

the town again. An NXT reporter asked him about the loss so one of his lady friends slapped him in the face.

Oney Lorcan vs. Hideo Itami

Hideo takes him up to the ropes and slaps Oney in the face to start before a kick to the chest gets two. Lorcan gets the same off his running Blockbuster, only to charge into a kick to the head. It's too early for the GTS as Lorcan slips out slaps the heck out of Itami over and over. They're so bad that Itami stumbles to the floor, allowing Oney to hit a flip dive off the top. Back in and Itami begs off but uses the distraction to kick Lorcan in the knee. More kicks set up three straight GTS's for no cover. Instead Kassius Ohno comes out to shove Itami down and it's a no contest at 6:40.

Rating: C+. A lot of that is due to Lorcan's slaps, which really did sound great. Lorcan is a heck of a tough jobber and can get a quick win if he's given the chance. I'm already liking Itami's heel character a lot more than his face stuff as the rapid fire kicks are a good way to cut someone down. Maybe this was what he was needing the whole time, as it's not like anything else was working.

Video on Drew McIntyre.

Ember Moon wants the winner of next week's triple threat.

No Way Jose vs. Killian Dain

The dancing doesn't get Jose very far to start but a top rope ax handle and big boot send Dain outside. Back from a break with Dain planting him with a slam to slow things down. We hit the neck crank for a bit before a Wasteland and backsplash crush Jose all over again. Jose fights back with some chops but makes the mistake of trying a fireman's carry. Dain misses a corner splash and eats a clothesline, followed by an impressive looking TKO. That's about it for the offense though as Dain comes back with a running dropkick to knock Jose into the corner, followed by the Ulster Plantation for the pin at 10:33.

Rating: C+. I know he's lost a lot of his fire but I still like Jose

every time I see him. If you can get him away from the dead end dancing gimmick, he might be able to actually mean something one day. As he is he's the perfect choice for a house show opener but I'd like to see him do something else. Dain is a great monster and should be able to be a big deal when he's given the chance.

Overall Rating: B-. This was the NXT that I know and love. They had a bunch of things they needed to get done and as a result, a lot of stories were advanced. This show advanced several stories and had me wanting to see more from some of them. On top of that they hyped up next week's title match to keep us coming back for more. Good show here and it's nice to be able to say that about NXT more often.

Results

Heavy Machinery b. Victor Andrews/Lars Sullivan – Compactor to Andrews

Peyton Royce b. Sarah Logan – Fisherman's suplex

Hideo Itami vs. Oney Lorcan went to a no contest when Kassius Ohno interfered

Killian Dain b. No Way Jose – Ulster Plantation

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NXT – May 3, 2017: What Do You Get When You Cross A Ruby With A Moon?

NXT

Date: May 3, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Percy Watson, Tom Phillips, Nigel McGuinness

We're rapidly approaching Takeover: Chicago and that means we need to fill in a lot of the card. As luck would have it, a major development is going to take place tonight as we have a battle royal for the #1 contendership to the Women's Title. That leaves a lot of doors open for challengers, including a potential Ember Moon rematch. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Killian Dain vs. Danny Burch

The monster Dain drives him into the corner and pulls him off the middle rope for a big crash. The backsplash connects and is greeted by a SHAVE YOUR BACK chant, followed by a series of elbow drops. Burch slugs away with a series of strikes but Dain flattens him with a running dropkick. The Ulster Plantation finishes Burch at 2:51.

The Velveteen Dream, whom I believe is Patrick Clark, is coming. The silhouette certainly looks like him.

Heavy Machinery vs. Ricardo Watts/Hector Kunsman

The jobbers make Rey Mysterio look huge. Dozovich runs Hector over to start and a double falling headbutt makes things even worse. Ricardo is dragged in and Machinery exchange chest bumps. Knight splashes both of them in the corner before Dozovich lifts them both at the same time for a

double World's Strongest Slam and the double pin at 2:41.

Post match Heavy Machinery says they love to have a good time, meaning some carb shakes and trips to the buffet. When they step in the ring, they have a hunger for smashing bodies. The appetizers are over now and they want the main course: the Authors of Pain. Heavy Machinery is very much a case of "what you see is what you get" but they play their roles very well and that's what matters the most.

Bobby Roode talks to Kona Reeves before Reeves faces Hideo Itami.

DIY might not have Heavy Machinery's size but they're the former NXT Tag Team Champions. They love more competition but the line starts behind them.

Kona Reeves vs. Hideo Itami

Itami has ditched the entrance gear and just comes out in his regular trunks and boots. Reeves jumps him before the bell though and has the advantage once the match actually starts. Kona turns up the cockiness but Hideo pops to his feet and fires off the clotheslines and kicks. More kicks knock Kona down in the corner and the GTS puts him away at 2:08. That's an effective squash but I'm not sure a two minute match is the best way to get him back on his feet after an injury and so close to what's going to be a twenty plus minute title match.

Video on Drew McIntyre, including a look back at his initial WWE run.

It's part two of the mini documentary on Roderick Strong. This time we're at home with his pregnant fiance and they're getting things ready for the baby's arrival. He loves the idea of being called a father and a husband and now those things are about to be true. We get some clips of Strong's very early career from his days in IPW Hardcore Wrestling and then his time in the Performance Center.

Now we go back to the Ring of Honor days, which still messes with me just a little bit. He was there for thirteen years and then he got the call. With tears in his eyes, Strong says don't give up and everything will be ok. We wrap it up with Strong holding his newborn baby. This was another

excellent package and made me think more of Strong (who I'm a fan of) than I have before, which is exactly the point. He hasn't made an impact yet (a match in Chicago would help) but that could change very quickly.

Roode is in William Regal's office and doesn't think much of the video. He also doesn't think Hideo should get the title shot yet because it could mess with the champ's face. Regal actually agrees and puts Itami in a #1 contenders match against Strong for next week. Strong comes in and has a staredown with Roode. I thought Roode vs. Itami was already set but I do like Itami having to earn the shot.

Battle Royal

Lacey Evans, Billie Kay, Peyton Royce, Nikki Cross, Liv Morgan, Ruby Riot, Ember Moon, Aliyah, Bianca Blair, Candice LeRae, Kimberly Frankele, Rachel Evers, Sonya Deville, Victoria Gonzalez, Sara Bridges

The winner gets Asuka in Chicago. Evans is better known as Macey Estrella, Deville is the former Daria Berenato and a lot of these women are unknowns without entrances. LeRae is a heavy fan favorite and gets a LET'S GO CANDICE chant. Gonzalez, who has some size to her, goes after Royce and Kay to start but can't get rid of them. It's your usual battle royal brawling with teased eliminations that don't go anywhere.

We take a break and come back with Gonzalez having been eliminated at the hands of Royce and Kaye. Blair is out next, followed by Aliyah elbowing Evers out to a chorus of booing. Bridges, Evans and Deville go out in the span of five seconds and Riot eliminates Kimberly. We're down to LeRae, Royce, Kay, Cross, Riot, Morgan, Moon and Aliyah. Kay kicks Candice out, earning possibly the most heat of her career.

Cross dumps Aliyah and the fans are rather pleased. Come on, Aliyah isn't....ok maybe she is that bad. Nikki does the same to Morgan and the fans are pleased all over again. Moon superkicks Kay out and gets rid of Peyton a few seconds later, leaving us with Moon, Riot and Cross. Cross goes straight for Riot but Ember kicks her in the face. All three wind up in the corner with Moon kicking the other two away and hitting the Eclipse on Cross. That's not enough for an elimination so Ember heads up again, only to have Asuka come in....for a no contest at 14:46.

Rating: D+. I liked the way they set this up with the unknowns not lasting very long, which should be the case when they didn't have any realistic chance to win the title. Just let us get to the big names and go from there. The ending though....yeah I'm not sold on that, though if they're going to a four way, this is certainly a better option than a triple elimination at the end.

Asuka sends Moon HARD to the floor and head first into the barricade. Riot gets kicked in the head and Cross is dropped as well, leaving Asuka to shout that no one is ready for her. Asuka runs off as Moon is holding her shoulder on the floor. Regal comes out to announce the four way title match for Chicago to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. This is another good example of a show that wasn't about the wrestling. Tonight we set up a Takeover match, set up a #1 contenders match for the NXT Title, looked at Roderick Strong some more and established Heavy Machinery as potential Tag Team Title contenders. They don't have a lot of time between Orlando and Chicago so this is about as logical of a path as they have.

Results

Killian Dain b. Danny Burch – Ulster Plantation

Heavy Machinery b. Ricardo Watts/Hector Kunsman – Double World's Strongest Slam

Hideo Itami b. Kona Reeves – GTS

A Battle Royal went to a no contest when Asuka interfered

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