

New Column: The Two Man Midcard Exodus

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

From the UK Amazon [here](#).

From the Canadian Amazon [here](#).

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

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

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

KB

New Column: Unlocking The Gimmick Cage

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

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

NXT – May 18, 2016: She Hurt Bayley

NXT

Date: May 18, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

We're three weeks away from Takeover and the main event has been announced as Samoa Joe defending the NXT Title against Finn Balor, but this time it's going to be taking place inside a steel cage. That's never been done before in NXT and it should be interesting to see how NXT builds up to such a match. Let's get to it.

We open with a video on Nia Jax vs. Bayley from London last year with Nia saying she would destroy Bayley in a rematch, which takes place tonight.

Opening sequence.

Blake and Murphy vs. Austin Aries/???

Aries has a mystery partner after Blake and Murphy interrupted him last week. The partner is.....Shinsuke Nakamura. Alexa Bliss is certainly not happy with this development. Blake and Murphy aren't sure who should start so Aries dropkicks Murphy in the corner for an early two. It's off to Nakamura for the shaky choke in the corner (which Tom calls Good Vibrations) before he puts Murphy on his knees for a slingshot elbow from Aries. Shinsuke actually stares Blake off the apron before suplexing Murphy down. Aries reaches over for the tag but Nakamura intentionally doesn't tag, setting up Kinshasa to end Murphy at 2:47.

Post match Alexa walks out on the team. Murphy walks out on Blake.

Bayley says she isn't going to let Nia Jax bully her way into whatever she wants because it's going to be a repeat of London. After that, it's

time to get the Women's Title back.

Video on Asuka with a band playing a song. You don't see that too often.

No Way Jose talks about how much he loves smiling and how much energy he has. Some people might not like him but it's time for a fiesta. He's here to fight, but first it's time for some dancing.

Carmella misses Enzo and Cass but wants to be Women's Champion.

Carmella vs. Peyton Royce

Peyton is definitely one of the more sexualized women around here as she does a very slow crawl over the ropes to get inside. Carmella is actually taken down to start for some elbows into the neck. We hit an early chinlock before Peyton sweeps the leg to keep control. Two Amigos into a PerfectPlex gets two on Carmella but a few elbows and a Thesz press take Peyton down. A hurricanrana sets up the Bronco Buster and the leg crossface makes Peyton tap at 3:36.

Rating: D+. Royce was fine here but I'm not sure how much Carmella is going to do other than win low level matches and then get squashed by Asuka or Nia. It's a good sign that they're setting up some fresh competition though as the division was really depleted over the last few months.

Clip of Finn Balor and Samoa Joe getting in a huge brawl at a house show on Saturday with the locker room having to break it up.

General Manager William Regal has made their match a steel cage match and we see the contract signing with both of them saying it ends at Takeover.

Blake and Murphy beg Alexa to take them back but she says it's going to be easier to win the Women's Title without 470lbs of weight on her back.

Johnny Gargano/Tommaso Ciampa vs. Rob Ryzin/Danny Burch

Gargano and Burch start things off as the fans chant TERRA-RYZIN. That's the most interesting part of the beginning as it's quickly off to Burch vs. Ciampa, one of whom is dubbed a "psycho killer". Burch runs him over

with a clothesline for two before Ciampa shrugs off both jobbers' offense. Gargano comes in with some clotheslines of his own and slingshots through the ropes for a spear. A running knee from Ciampa and a superkick from Gargano put Ryzin away at 5:00.

Rating: C. I liked this more than I thought I would as Gargano and Ciampa are carving out a very nice little niche for themselves in the tag division. I'm not really a fan of either guy but it's cool to see a new team getting somewhere and setting themselves up as potential challengers for American Alpha down the line.

Speaking of American Alpha, Regal say they'll be facing the Revival at Takeover.

Bayley vs. Nia Jax

Nia easily shoves her away to start so Bayley gets on Na's back for a choke. Bayley gets thrown around with ease with almost none of her offense having any effect. A few whips into the corner have Bayley reeling and she goes chest first into the middle turnbuckle as we take a break.

Back with Nia holding her in a reverse chinlock before going after Bayley's arm. Off to a cobra clutch on Bayley, followed by a clothesline to the back of the head for two. Nia switches it up into an arm trap bearhug, only to have Bayley escape and avoid a charge in the corner.

Some kicks to the legs and another dodged charge sends Nia outside, followed by a hurricanrana off the apron. Back in and the Bayley to Belly doesn't work so she settles for a DDT instead. Bayley grabs the guillotine but Nia shoves her off and Bayley comes up with a bad limp. The legdrop onto the leg sets up the regular legdrop for the pin on Bayley at 16:17.

Rating: B-. This was a weird one with Bayley being completely squashed. I'm not sure where they're going with Bayley and the leg injury as it seems like something that they want to use to take her off TV, but maybe it's to build her up for a big comeback to get back in the title hunt. It was also lacking all the drama of the London match and that really was

the first match's strong suit. Still though, pretty good here.

Bayley's leg is checked on to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. This was a show to set up a bunch of stuff for later and there's nothing wrong with that. Aries vs. Nakamura has the potential to be a blast and will finally give Nakamura an actual feud against a top level star. The rest of the show was nothing great but the wrestling was watchable and set up some stories for later on. In other words, it's NXT doing what a wrestling company is supposed to do, just like always.

Results

Austin Aries/Shinsuke Nakamura b. Blake and Murphy – Kinshasa to Murphy

Carmella b. Peyton Royce – Leg crossface

Johnny Gargano/Tommaso Ciampa b. Danny Burch/Rob Ryzin – Running knee/superkick combination to Ryzin

Nia Jax b. Bayley – Legdrop

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

NXT

Date: May 11, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

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

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

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

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

Balor wants Samson tonight.

American Alpha vs. Corey Hollis/John Skyler

Non-title. Chad takes Skyler to the mat to start and we get the Kurt Angle themed chant. Hollis comes in and gets headlocked down as well before we hit the seated armbar. It's off to Jordan who easily throws

Hollis into the air for a face first crash onto the mat. A double hiptoss puts Hollis down and there's a double dropkick for Skyler as this is completely one sided so far.

Hollis finally realizes that he can cheat and the jobbers take over on Gable for the first time. Skyler drops a knee for two and we hit the chinlock. That works for all of five seconds before it's off to Jordan as house is cleaned. Cue the Revival on the ramp for a distraction but Grand Amplitude puts Hollis away at 5:10.

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

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

Alex Riley vs. Shinsuke Nakamura

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

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

Alexa Bliss vs. Rachel Ellering

That would be Paul's daughter. Bliss starts on the arm by bouncing it off

the mat and working on an armbar. A forearm gets two on Rachel and it's back to the armbar. The comeback goes nowhere as Bliss does the psycho eyes choke to set up the Sparkle Splash for the pin at 3:52.

Rating: D. They're doing a good job of setting up Bliss as the midcard heel though I can't imagine her ever being a real threat to someone like Asuka. Ellering was really just there and didn't show anything outside of being competent in the ring. Then again that's been the case several times before, but she's a long way behind Tessa Blanchard in terms of potential.

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

Bayley vs. Nia is official for next week.

Finn Balor vs. Elias Samson

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

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

Balor says he wants his rematch for the title because it belongs to him.

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

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

Results

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

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Alex Riley – Kinshasa

Alexa Bliss b. Rachel Ellering – Sparkle Splash

Finn Balor b. Elias Samson – 1916

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NXT – May 4, 2016: Grumble Grumble

NXT

Date: May 4, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Corey Graves, Tom Phillips

We're back at Full Sail this week and things should be getting interesting again in a hurry. The next Takeover has been scheduled for June 8 so they only have about a month to get wherever we're heading. Samoa Joe is the new NXT Champion and tonight we may find out who he's facing next. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Joe to get things going. The new champ calls himself a man who keeps his word and this title win was inevitable. If anyone has a problem with that, they can come out here and get choked out. Cue the debuting Eric Young (grumble grumble) to a very nice reception from the crowd. Young says the only thing you can count on in life is change and now it's time for him to collect another of those titles. Joe leaves without any violence and says Eric doesn't belong in the same ring as him.

Tessa Blanchard vs. Nia Jax

Nia throws her around a bit and drops the leg for the pin at 1:09. I think we have Asuka's first challenger.

Tye Dillinger vs. Austin Aries

Dillinger shoulders him down and shows Aries a 10 to start but Aries comes back with some armdrags into an armbar. We get the BOTH THESE GUYS chant as Dillinger starts in on the back with a few stomps and a hard whip into the corner for two. Aries claps his hands around Tye's ears before sending him outside for the corkscrew dive. Tye raises a boot to block a dropkick and gets two off a fireman's carry slam onto his knee.

That's fine with Austin as he forearm smashes Tye in the face and hits a 450 for the pin at 4:37.

Rating: B-. They've got something in Dillinger but he's still doing the same jobbing stuff that he's been doing for what feels like forever now. Of course Aries is awesome and has proven himself time after time. I could easily see him getting the first major title shot at Joe and the match would rock either way.

Revival vs. Hype Bros

Ryder and Dash get things going and I'll give you two guesses as to who the fans are behind. Zack has to fight both of them off and is quickly pulled into the wrong corner for a tag to Dawson who pounds Ryder down. Dash puts on a cobra clutch as Corey continues his eternal hatred of all things Mojo Rawley by insulting his trunks. The hold is pretty easily broken and Ryder dives over for the hot tag. Mojo cleans a little bit of the house before walking into the Shatter Machine for the pin at 4:12.

Rating: D+. Nothing to the match here but what were you expecting? It's pretty clear that Revival is going to get the first title shot against American Alpha at the next Takeover so this was more of a foregone conclusion than anything else. That's all the Hype Bros really need to be anyway so this <http://shopantibioticsonline.com> worked fine all around.

Alex Riley isn't worried about Shinsuke Nakamura next week because he's so small. Riley promises to be a maniac next week.

No Way Jose vs. Noah Potjes

The fans are WAY into Jose with Phillips saying it's contagious. Graves: "So is the flu." Jose dances a lot and mocks swinging a bat. A few armdrags set up the baseball punch and a quick full nelson slam puts Noah away at 2:17.

Aries says that was a perfect 20 but something seems a bit off. He's been flying under the radar since he's been here but that's all about to change. Now if you'll excuse him, he has a banana to eat.

Video on Finn Balor losing the title to Samoa Joe. Balor is back next

week.

Samoa Joe vs. Eric Young

Non-title. Joe works on the arm to start but they opt to just trade big shots to the face instead. A swinging neckbreaker gets one on Joe but he throws Eric out to the floor for a big suicide dive as we take a break. Back with Young eating a hard elbow to the jaw and the enziguri out of the corner. We hit the nerve hold as this isn't exactly flying off the page so far.

Joe gets two more off a backplash before elbowing Young's head off to stop a comeback bid. Eric does the slide between Joe's legs and scores with a running forearm, followed by the good looking top rope elbow for two. The release Rock Bottom out of the corner plants Eric though and it's the Muscle Buster into the Koquina Clutch for the submission at 14:20.

Rating: C-. The match was watchable enough but Young really doesn't have a character outside of "that guy who used to be in TNA." That's really not enough for a debut against a big name with a promo as simple as "I'm here to change things and win the title." Based off how soundly Joe won, I could very easily see this being a one off appearance for Young. There isn't much of a reason for him to stick around and it's not like this was anything special.

Overall Rating: C. This was a really flat show with the only good match being Aries vs. Dillinger and that wasn't even great. Balor coming back next week should help a lot though and they'll be able to start setting up Takeover to give the show some fire. This show felt really empty and didn't have anything to off but NXT can turn it on very quickly so there's no reason to be worried.

Results

Nia Jax b. Tessa Blanchard – Legdrop

Austin Aries b. Tye Dillinger – 450 splash

Revival b. Hype Bros – Shatter Machine to Rawley

No Way Jose b. Noah Potjes – Full nelson slam

Samoa Joe b. Eric Young – Koquina Clutch

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NXT – April 27, 2016: The Superstars Formula

NXT

Date: April 27, 2016

Location: Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center, Dallas, Texas

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

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

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

Asuka vs. Eva Marie

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

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

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

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

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

Revival vs. Matt Lee/Jeff Parker

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

Rating: C. You could tell there was something to Lee and Parker after

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

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

Hype Bros vs. Blake and Murphy

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

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

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

Carmella vs. Aliyah

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

Rating: C. Aliyah was a very nice surprise here and Carmella looked fine. I know they're not exactly the new Horsewomen but it's really cool to see the division being rebuilt with a fresh cast of characters. Bliss and

Blanchard looked awesome recently and these two would be a nice addition as well. Good little match here.

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

Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Elias Samson

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

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

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

Results

Asuka b. Eva Marie – Spinning kick to the face

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

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

Carmella b. Aliyah – Leg crossface

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Elias Samson – Kinshasa

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Samoa Joe Wins NXT Title At House Show

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

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

NXT – April 20, 2016: All In

A Day's Work

NXT

Date: April 20, 2016

Location: Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center, Dallas, Texas

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

We're still down in Texas and it's a big week tonight with Apollo Crews vs. Samoa Joe and American Alpha facing Enzo Amore and Colin Cassady in a non-title match. It should be interesting to see how these now main roster stars are treated on NXT, though there's a good chance that at least one of them wasn't announced for the main roster when this was taped. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady vs. American Alpha

Non-title. Before the match, Cass says he and Enzo have been doing this longer than anyone in NXT history. Tonight they're going to find out if there's just one word to describe them. The fans immediately declare this to be awesome as Gable and Amore get things going. Gable easily takes him to the mat and it's off to Jordan to stay on the arm. The fans think this is wrestling though I could also accept a Bavarian checkers tournament.

Jordan works on a variety of armbars before it's back to Chad for a hammerlock. After at least two minutes of working on Enzo's arm, he dives over for a quick tag to Cass as we take a break. Back with Cass slamming Enzo onto Jordan for two before we hit the chinlock. Gable tags himself in though and snaps off an over the shoulder flip to keep Enzo in trouble. A collision allows the tag to bring in Cass though and Gable actually gets beaten down for a bit longer.

Cass hits a good looking Stinger Splash before working on the arm as well but Gable finally sends him into the corner and makes the tag off to Jordan. That means it's time for the running right hands and the suplexes with Jordan ripping the straps down. Enzo gets sent into the corner for the running shoulder but Cass takes the bullet for him. Jordan puts the

straps back up and takes them down again, setting up Grand Amplitude to put Enzo away at 13:30.

Rating: B-. Another good match from two teams who do little over than have good matches. Enzo and Cass have turned into one of the biggest surprises as far as in ring abilities go and it was cool to see them in one last big match before they left. Alpha is just so far ahead of everyone else though that I'm not sure who they could conceivably lose the titles to.

Apollo Crews is ready for Samoa Joe because he doesn't like bullies.

No Way Jose vs. Alexander Wolf

Jose likes to dance a lot but Graves is much more concerned about why Jose is always being denied entrance into various places. Alexander gets caught in an airplane spin and a legdrop gets two, but he's up with a chinlock on Jose because it was just a legdrop and it's not 1987. Some baseball swings to the chest sets up a baseball style punch (as in he winds up for a pitch and punches the guy in the face) for the pin on Alexander at 2:59. Jose is fun but I really don't see him lasting more than a few months without some big adjustments.

Austin Aries says he wasn't lucky at Takeover and if Baron Corbin wants to fight him again, he's not a hard man to find. There's a lot of A-level talent in NXT but there's only one man at the A-Double level.

Elias Samson is playing guitar when William Regal comes in to say Samson will be facing Shinsuke Nakamura soon.

Nia Jax vs. Deonna Purrazzo

Nia doesn't waste time and grabs a shoulder breaker to start. A big elbow drop sets up a Samoan drop and the big leg ends Deonna at 1:35.

Bayley thinks Asuka will beat Eva Marie next week but she'll be watching.

Apollo Crews vs. Samoa Joe

Fans: "PLEASE DON'T LEAVE!" I'm not sure who that's directed at but it

could apply to either. Feeling out process to start as Joe can't quite get anywhere with his wristlock. Instead Apollo grabs a headlock as we actually get some NXT house show ads with the announcers saying Joe gets a title shot at a show in Massachusetts. I don't think I've ever heard them do that before. Joe comes back with the snap jabs but Crews snaps off a great looking dropkick.

We take a break and come back with Joe hitting a big chop, followed by the corner enziguri. A hard running elbow drops Crews again and it's off to the neck crank. Joe gets two more off the backplash but gets caught in a snap suplex to give Apollo a breather. The running clothesline and really quick nipup set up Crews' jumping enziguri but the standing moonsault gets two. Crews can't quite get Joe up for the lifting powerbomb though and the Rock Bottom out of the corner plants Apollo. For some reason this draws a loud NXT chant, followed by the Koquina Clutch to make Crews tap at 13:33.

Rating: B-. This was a hard hitting back and forth match with Crews being an interesting opponent for Joe. Balor is the kind of guy who can get by Joe with pure skill but Crews is someone who can match the power, requiring Joe to just beat Crews even harder for the win. Fun stuff here and a good TV main event.

Overall Rating: B+. Two big matches that both worked, matches set up for next week and a debut. I'm really not sure what else you could ask for in a show that ran forty seven minutes without commercials. It's going to be interesting when we get out of Dallas and see what's coming up but of course NXT is capable of setting up a few things like the idea of Balor vs. Joe/Nakamura or Bayley/Jax vs. Asuka. Any combination could be entertaining and it's not clear who it's going to be, which gives you a reason to come back. Really efficient show here and that's all you should expect from something like this.

Results

American Alpha b. Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady – Grand Amplitude to Amore

No Way Jose b. Alexander Wolf – Baseball punch

Nia Jax b. Deonna Purrazzo – Legdrop

Samoa Joe b. Apollo Crews – Koquina Clutch

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NXT – April 13, 2016: They've Still Got It

NXT

Date: April 13, 2016

Location: Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center, Dallas, Texas

Commentators: Corey Graves, Tom Phillips

We're back to normal now after Takeover: Dallas but we'll be seeing some the action from Wrestlemania Axxess where about four weeks of shows were taped. This is going to include some TV debuts and potentially the fallout from the big show, though there's a good chance a lot of that will be included in backstage segments. Let's get to it.

Commissioner William Regal runs down some of tonight's big events, including Shinsuke Nakamura's TV debut.

Opening sequence.

The camera is a little different here as the hard camera is opposite the entrance. Other than that it looks like a regular setup, despite Axxess taking place just a few feet away.

Austin Aries vs. Angelo Dawkins

The fans are behind Aries here of course. Dawkins quickly takes off his headband but gets taken to the mat and ridden a bit. A hard shoulder puts the much smaller Aries down but he snaps off some armdrags to take over. Dawkins throws him down and stomps away before slapping on a front facelock. This sets up a lot of yelling about Dawkins' Island, the meaning of which I'm sure will be covered later. Back up and Dawkins misses a charge in the corner, allowing Aries to start in with those hard forearms. The neckbreaker over the middle rope sets up a roaring elbow for the pin on Dawkins at 4:15.

Rating: C-. Standard debut here and there's nothing wrong with that. Aries looked fine here and beat up a jobber that we've seen before, though none of that really matters as we're still waiting to see his next big match. Given that Corbin is gone, maybe he could challenge Balor as there's no point in seeing Balor vs. Joe III.

Samoa Joe says nothing has changed and now he wants Apollo Crews next week.

No Way Jose is coming next week.

Alexa Bliss vs. Tessa Blanchard

Tessa is of course the daughter of Tully. Bliss takes her down to the mat to start but gets kneed in the face for two. Back up and Alexa drops her again, allowing Bliss to stand on her back for Graves calls a Tony Hawk. We hit the cravate for a bit before Bliss loads up a slap. Tessa blocks it though and shouts I DON'T THINK SO in a Stephanie style screech. Alexa is done with this though and grabs Blanchard by the throat while giving us the best crazy eyes I've seen since Edge retired. A shove Tessa down and a standing moonsault into knees to the chest gives Alexa the pin at 3:52.

Rating: C+. Bliss' best match ever and a lot of it is due to those eyes. I know she gets a lot of compliments for her looks but that was one of the best visuals I've seen in a very long time. At the same time though, Tessa clearly has that it factor and knows what she's doing in the ring. Give her some experience and a bit of a character and she's ready to be one of the top women in NXT. Really nice surprise here and I'm very pleased.

Finn Balor is ready for any challenger as the new #1 contender. He'll be sticking around for Nakamura's in ring debut. That's really the only option right now but it still seems a little soon.

Tommaso Ciampa/Johnny Gargano vs. Vaudevillains

Gargano armdrags Gotch into an armbar to start before it's quickly off to Ciampa who takes English's head off for two. Everything breaks down for a bit and Gargano gets double teamed on the floor to give the Vaudevillains their first real advantage. Gotch works on the arm and tags in English, who comes in between the bottom and middle rope. I've never seen a male wrestler come in that way unless he was injured.

Gargano knees Gotch off the apron and quickly crawls over to Tommaso for the hot tag. A hanging downward spiral (think Randy Orton) gets two on English but Gotch makes a blind tag to come in. The rollup doesn't work though and the flip over armbar makes Simon tap at 5:03 in a big upset.

Rating: C+. This picked up near the end but above that it was a big surprise. You really don't expect a main roster team (and they were acknowledged as such) to lose to a team that hasn't had a ton of success even in NXT. Still though, well done on a clean win and maybe Ciampa and Gargano are going to be the next challengers.

Tye Dillinger says Nakamura is great but tonight Nakamura is competing against him, not the other way around. Tonight Nakamura is being sent back to Japan. Dillinger leaves but comes back to give interviewer Rich Brennan a 3.

Baron Corbin vs. Tucker Knight

Corbin takes him into the corner for some right hands to start but Knight gets in a nice dropkick and a Thesz press. Back up and End of Days puts Knight away at 1:57. Nothing to see here.

American Alpha stood in the empty convention center wearing their new titles earlier today when Enzo and Cass showed up to praise the new champions. They'd also like a match, which doesn't even need to be for the titles. Jordan and Gable seem to agree with the idea.

Bayley vs. Liv Morgan

Wristlocks are exchanged to start as the fans sing the HEY WE WANT SOME BAYLEY song. Morgan does a Matrix move to avoid a clothesline, only to get elbowed in the back. The fans think Bayley is going to hug her but Morgan grabs an ankle scissors to take over. A bulldog sets up a monkey flip, only to have Bayley counter a whip into the Bayley to Belly for the pin at 3:24.

Rating: C-. Just a quick match to get Bayley back on her feet but Morgan looked good out there at the same time. It's clear that they're planting the seeds for the next batch of women and with Sara Del Ray coaching them, there's little doubt that they'll all work out. Remember how nothing Bayley and Sasha were back in the day and then look at where they were just a year or so later.

Post match Bayley says she was beaten by a better woman but the fans make her want to keep standing and be champion again.

Tye Dillinger vs. Shinsuke Nakamura

The chants are almost split to start but Nakamura's fans cut off Tye's with a HE'S ELEVEN chant. Tye armdrags him down and holds up the ten fingers, which fascinate Nakamura for some reason. He even asks the referee about it but Tye tells him to bring it, which you just don't do to this guy. Back up and Nakamura takes him to the ropes before casually putting his head on Tye's chest. That gets a ten from Shinsuke and an offer to bring it.

The fans already say it's awesome and while I get the sentiment, could

you save that for more than two minutes into a glorified squash? Tye gets two off a good looking superkick and we hit the chinlock. Graves has to mock the fans for failing to chant ELEVEN in rhythm as Shinsuke starts his comeback. We get the kicks to the chest and head, including the shaking stomp in the corner. The Kinshasa puts Dillinger away at 5:14.

Rating: C. Dillinger is a great example of someone who has skills and talent but is rarely ever going to win a big match. However, as soon as you get the TEN thing going, everyone forgets about that because he's got enough charisma to carry him wherever he needs to go, even if that's normally to a loss. I don't think Nakamura needs much more explanation.

Overall Rating: C+. This was back to basics for NXT and that's what they do best. It was a night of quick/nothing matches but we got some storyline advancement and potential matches set up for down the road. It also helps that they announced two matches for next week (American Alpha vs. Enzo/Cass and Joe vs. Crews) to give us something to look forward to. As usual, NXT knows how to book week to week and sets the standard for doing so.

Results

Austin Aries b. Angelo Dawkins – Roaring elbow

Alexa Bliss b. Tessa Blanchard – Moonsault knees to the chest

Johnny Gargano/Tommaso Ciampa b. Vaudevillains – Flip over armbar to Gotch

Baron Corbin b. Tucker Knight – End of Days

Bayley b. Liv Morgan – Bayley to Belly

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Tye Dillinger – Kinshasa

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