

Takeover: WarGames 2020: The Ringing Endorsement



IMG Credit: WWE

Takeover: WarGames 2020

Date: December 6, 2020

Location: Capitol Wrestling Center, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Beth Phoenix, Vic Joseph, Wade Barrett

It's time for what has become something close to NXT's signature match and that year has one of the better looking matches in the show's history. Just like last year, we have the men's and women's edition of the show's namesake match, with a good enough looking undercard. Let's get to it.

The opening video is a general look at WarGames, including the cage being lowered. With that out of the way, we switch into a look at the two WarGames matches.

Team Blackheart vs. Team LeRae

Shotzi Blackheart, Rhea Ripley, Ember Moon, Io Shirai

Candice LeRae, Raquel Gonzalez, Dakota Kai, Toni Storm

We start with the Women's WarGames match, including a rundown of the rules. After the time is up, the team who won the advantage coming in (Blackheart in this case) sends someone in

for a 2-1 advantage for three minutes. Once that time is up, Team LeRae will even things up for three minutes. They alternate until all four each are in and then it's first pinfall or submission wins. And yes Shotzi has a new and bigger tank, which even shoots something at the side of the cage.

Dakota Kai and Moon start things off and go straight to the mat for the brawl. Moon flips off a sleeper attempt and hits a flipping clothesline in the corner. Dakota sends her into the ropes but Moon is right back with a crossbody against the cage. A charge is cut off by Kai's raised boots and the Kairopactor connects. Kai chokes away and it's Shotzi coming in for the advantage. Blackheart whips out a toolbox as she comes in to clean house on Kai. The reverse Cannonball connects against the ropes but Shotzi rams her into the cage.

Kai goes after Moon but Shotzi is back up with a doomsday missile dropkick to put Kai down. Gonzalez comes in to tie it up but Shotzi and Moon are right there to jump her at the door. It doesn't seem to matter though as Gonzalez wrecks both of them, including powerbombing Shotzi against the cage. Kai is back in to clean house and a kick to the face rocks Shotzi in the corner. A springboard from one ring to another takes out Blackheart and Moon again but it's Ripley coming in, giving Gonzalez a VERY interested face.

The showdown is on (they've got something with these two) until Ripley is cut off by Kai. Moon and Shotzi take care of Gonzalez, leaving Ripley to destroy Kai on her own. It's time for the toolbox and Ripley busts out a hammer, only to drop it to send Kai into the cage. Gonzalez has dropped Moon and Shotzi though, meaning NOW we get the real showdown. They meet between the rings and slug it out with Ripley getting the better of things until Storm, with kendo sticks, comes in to take over.

Everyone else gets back in but Team LeRae takes over without

much trouble. The stick beating is on but all six go to the corner, with Moon hitting a Steiner Bulldog on Kai and Blackheart/Ripley being slammed down as well, leaving all six down. Shirai is in for the final advantage and slides in a ladder, only to be kicked out by Gonzalez. Things get creative as Gonzalez keeps knocking Shirai off, either out of the door or off the side. The time expires and it's LeRae coming in, only to have Shirai waiting on her outside.

Cue Indi Hartwell to jump Shirai and throw in some more weapons. The big beatdown is on, with the referee even telling LeRae and company to stop and give Shotzi a breather. Moon is back up but it's Shirai on top of the cage, putting a trashcan over herself and diving onto EVERYBODY for the huge spot. Shirai gets the hammer and cleans house with it (meaning she hits people either with the bottom or flat across the back) and the recorded NXT chants start up again.

There's the moonsault to Gonzalez but everyone makes the save. LeRae gets the Gargano Escape on Moon (with a wrench) at the same time Shotzi puts Storm in Cattle Mutilation. Shotzi uses a chair to knock a kendo stick out of Storm's hands before picking up the stick (uh...) to clean house again. Shirai's charge is sent into the corner and Kai hits the running boot to the face. Kai puts Shirai in the trashcan again for a top rope double stomp but Moon makes the save.

Two chairs are set up and Moon hits the Eclipse to drive Kai into said chairs. Storm makes the save and hits Storm Zero to drive Moon into the trashcan for two. Ripley is back up with the Prism Trap to Storm, with Shirai adding a running dropkick for a bonus. That gives Ripley two and the ladder is bridged between the rings. LeRae superkicks a trashcan lid into Ripley's face as another ladder is set up in the corner. Shotzi and LeRae climb at the same time, with LeRae being knocked off and onto some chairs.

LeRae puts the chair onto herself, flips it over, and points

at it before Shotzi drops a backplash for the (very well choreographed) crushing. Shirai's Over The Moonsault hits Ripley but Storm drives Ripley into the cover for the save. Shirai gets caught on top and Gonzalez superbombs her through the bridged ladder for the pin (and likely the next title shot) at 35:34.

Rating: B. This was a long and brutal fight, though it didn't feel quite like your traditional WarGames. That's because this isn't your traditional WarGames, and for the NXT version, it worked out well. There were some great spots in here (that Eclipse onto the chairs looked awesome) but it did feel like they were stretching things out for the sake of stretching things out at times. What we got was a heck of a fight though and that's what it needed to be, with the right team winning.

Finn Balor says after the team sports end, it's time for all eyes to go back on the Prince.

Tommaso Ciampa vs. Timothy Thatcher

Ciampa said he wanted to fight and Thatcher was game. Thatcher takes him to the mat and starts working on the arm before switching over to the leg for a change. Ciampa is right back by working on the leg, including stomping on the leg. Thatcher sends him outside though and catches him with an uppercut on the way back in. Hold on though as Ciampa gets knocked into the ropes, meaning the referee needs to check on him. Thatcher is fine enough to uppercut away and sends Ciampa outside for a second.

Back in and another uppercut means another check from the referee so Thatcher grabs a neck crank. Thatcher pulls on the arm as the slugout begins, only to have to send Ciampa into the corner. They bang heads for a double knockdown but it's Ciampa coming up with the clothesline comeback. A superplex gets two on Thatcher, who is right back with the guillotine. Ciampa drives him through the ropes for the break and they're

both down on the floor.

Back in and Ciampa runs him over, setting up a bulldog choke. Thatcher's ear is busted open as he makes the rope and manages a German suplex to drop Ciampa again. Ciampa can't hit Willow's Bell as he is pulled throat first into the top rope instead. That's fine with Ciampa, who ties him in the ropes and chops away, setting up Willow's Bell for the pin at 16:55.

Rating: B. They built this up as two people wanting to beat the heck out of each other and that's what we got. There was no reason to try for anything more than Thatcher using his technical stuff against Ciampa's brawling and the formula worked out rather well. Good, hard hitting match here and while I might have gone with Thatcher winning, Ciampa being rebuilt is a good thing for NXT.

They stare at each other after the match so this might not be over.

We recap Cameron Grimes vs. Dexter Lumis. Grimes is cocky and loud so Lumis has been stalking him, including inside a haunted house at Halloween Havoc. As a result, Grimes has been running away over and over so let's have a strap match.

Cameron Grimes vs. Dexter Lumis

The referee is ready to put the strap on but Grimes wants to use his own. That's not cool but Grimes jumps Lumis before the bell. They head outside with Grimes sending him into various things and choking with the strap. Back in and Lumis hits a Thesz press to hammer away and now the strap goes on, meaning the bell can ring (so we can get some bonus Lumis you see). Grimes heads outside and tries to escape over the barricade, only to get pulled back for an uppercut.

A hard whip sends Grimes into the barricade but Lumis gets sent over for a change. That lets Lumis do his big scary pull up (he's no Keith Lee) but Grimes pulls him back to ringside

in a crash. A shot to the face drops Lumis again and Grimes wraps the strap around his eyes. With that not being enough, Grimes puts a hood over Lumis' head and takes him back inside for a whipping. Lumis whips out a spinebuster and, after taking off the hood, heads outside to wrap the strap around the structure around the post.

That goes nowhere as Grimes escapes and kicks Lumis in the chest, only to be pulled off the apron. Back in again and Lumis whips away, only to get German suplexed into the corner. Grimes unloads with a chair before having a seat in it for a change. Lumis catches a charge and hits a fall away slam, only to get pulled off the top. Grimes' flipping powerslam gets two but both the Cave In and Silence are countered. Lumis ties the legs up with the strap and Grimes goes face first into the open chair. Silence goes on and Grimes taps at 12:55.

Rating: B-. They had a good match here and Grimes is still a natural treasure but...WHAT IS SO SPECIAL ABOUT LUMIS??? I've yet to miss an episode of NXT and for the life of me I do not understand what is so special about this guy. I don't get what NXT sees in him and yet it just keeps going for months on end. Anyway, pretty good match with some creative spots, but in the end, it's still Lumis and that cuts off a lot of my interest.

The lights flicker and a vulture flies around. Karrion Kross' voice is heard saying Tick Tock. Since Kross' theme is a clock and he said tick tock over and over, commentary has no idea who this is.

We recap the triple threat match for the North American Title. Johnny Gargano won the title from Damian Priest thanks to some outside interference at Halloween Havoc. That made him cocky so he rigged a wheel to choose Leon Ruff as his first challenger. Priest interfered to cost Gargano the title, making Ruff the fluke champion. Ruff did not like being called a joke and agreed to defend against both at once.

North American Title: Leon Ruff vs. Johnny Gargano vs. Damian Priest

Ruff is defending and gets sent into the corner early on, leaving Gargano to hit a superkick. Gargano takes Ruff into the corner but Priest is back in to throw Ruff out of the way for a second time. Back in and Ruff hits a double missile dropkick before stepping up to Priest. That isn't the best idea as Priest grabs him by the throat until Gargano makes the save. Priest gets double teamed down but Gargano turns on Ruff with the slingshot spear. Priest is back up as they head outside, with Ruff insisting that he is not a joke.

That earns him a shot to the face and a Razor's Edge through the barricade as the crowd noise doesn't seem pleased with Priest. Referees check on Ruff as Priest apologizes for hurting him like that. Gargano is back up but One Final Beat is blocked so Gargano goes with a standing Sliced Bread for two instead. Priest blasts him with a clothesline and they're both down. With Priest down on the ramp, Ruff comes back and uses him as a launchpad for a clothesline.

A rope walk flip dive off the top takes both challengers down on the floor. Back in and a twisting rope rope cutter (The heck was that?) drops Gargano again, but it only seems to get on his nerves. Ruff clotheslines Gargano for two but Priest is back in, saying Ruff is out of chances. Priest kicks him in the head and lifts them both up in a double Downward Spiral. The double teaming takes Priest down again though, this time with his arms getting tied in the ropes.

Ruff gets quite the two count off a crucifix but Gargano pulls him into the Gargano Escape, right in front of Priest. That's as bad of an idea as it sounds as Priest gets out and makes the save. The spinwheel kick drops Gargano and Ruff is sent outside, leaving Gargano to take the South of Heaven chokeslam. Cue three Ghostfaces to jump Priest, who shrugs all of them off. Three more show up so Priest hits a big step up

flip dive to the floor. Another dive takes out the original trio.

Priest is all fired up (great visual) and chokeslams Gargano onto the apron. Back in and Ruff hits the frog splash for two on Gargano with Priest making the save. The Reckoning is broken up and they trade kicks to the face, with Priest knocking Gargano silly. Cue another Ghostface with a lead pipe to Priest's back though, allowing Gargano to hit One Final Beat on Ruff for the pin and the title at 17:31.

Rating: B. This was an interesting match as you had Gargano winning the title, but Priest and Ruff got to showcase themselves very well. Priest looks like the monster of monsters right now and that fired up look on his face after the dives was great. At the same time you have Ruff, who probably just moved past the peak of his career, getting a chance to show you what he can do. I can always go for someone making the most of their chances and that is exactly what he did here. Nice job all around with probably the right result.

Post match the main Ghostface is....Austin Theory.

New Year's Evil is a special episode of NXT on January 6.

We recap the men's WarGames match. Pat McAfee and Company got together and ran over NXT, including taking out the Undisputed Era. They set their sights on Finn Balor, but the Era is back for a big fight. That means a William Regal WARGAMES announcement and here we are.

Undisputed Era vs. Team McAfee

Adam Cole, Kyle O'Reilly, Bobby Fish, Roderick Strong

Pat McAfee, Oney Lorcan, Danny Burch, Pete Dunne

O'Reilly and Dunne start things off and Team McAfee has the advantage. They take their time to start with neither being able to get very far early on. O'Reilly takes him down by the

arm to start but can't get the triangle. He can't get the cross armbreaker either so Dunne pulls him into a triangle choke in the ropes for a change. With that not going very far, Dunne cranks on the fingers, only to have go after the fingers in the corner. A stomp to the fingers misses so O'Reilly goes with a choke.

O'Reilly knees him in the chest, only to get pulled into a cross armbreaker. That's broken and it's Oney Lorcan coming in to kick away at O'Reilly. The double teaming is on with O'Reilly going down but fighting back in a hurry. Lorcan gets caught in the ropes for a guillotine legdrop but Dunne dropkicks the leg out. It's Bobby Fish coming in to start throwing the knees and there's a spinebuster to Lorcan. Dunne is back up with a Kimura on O'Reilly but Fish makes the save with a choke.

They go into the cage until time runs out, with Danny Burch telling Pat McAfee that he has this. Burch grabs a bag to pull out a cricket bat to clean house. Like any villain though, Burch takes too long talking trash and gets pulled into a kneebar. Dunne breaks it up with a stomp to the arm and it's Lorcan with his own cricket bat. The group stomping is on but here's Roderick Strong running in...and getting stomped down immediately.

Strong fights up to clean house with a dropkick to Lorcan and a backbreaker to Dunne. He heads to the middle of the rings and hits the running forearms to all three at once in a nice little sequence. Lorcan manages to send Strong face first into the cage though and McAfee and Company take over again. With the Era in trouble, it's McAfee coming in to complete the team, though he needs to grab a table. Make that four tables, each with a member of the Era's name included.

With all four in, McAfee finally gets in as the team is dismantling the Era. Strong is driven through his table and it's Cole coming in to finally complete the field. Since

McAfee and Company are waiting on him, Cole whips out a fire extinguisher to clear the ring and it's time to get going. All of the usual takes care of everyone but McAfee and the showdown is on. Dunne steps in Cole's way though and we hit the slugout, with Dunne taking him down and stomping away at the head.

The Bitter End is countered with a quick DDT but McAfee grabs Cole's arms so Dunne can kick him in the head. O'Reilly takes Dunne down with a chair and tells McAfee to come fight him if he wants to be a wrestler. Kyle goes on the best rant I've ever heard from him, telling McAfee that he's nothing and to come get some. Everyone is back up and the big fight is on with Lorcan hitting a Blockbuster. O'Reilly and Strong knee Dunne down with Lorcan making the save.

Cole starts kicking people in the face until McAfee chop blocks him down. With the required WOO's, McAfee puts on a pretty good Figure Four while the other six are brawling at the ropes. Cole turns it over with Dunne having to make his own save. The Era is in trouble with the Cole table being set up but Strong and Fish kick Lorcan and Burch down. Cole hits Dunne with the brainbuster onto the knee for two and sets up a table in the middle of the ring.

Dunne gets powerbombed onto Burch onto a table, which doesn't break (Barrett: "Where are we getting these tables from?"). Strong splashes both of them through the table and Cole shoves McAfee off the top and through another table in a massive crash. And Company is caught up against the cage so the rest of the Era charges into them with a long series of strikes. Cole gets in on it as well and the Era stands tall. McAfee is all alone and despite claims of a bad back, he tries to scale the cage, which goes about as well as expected.

The group beatdown is on and McAfee is sent hard into the cage. With McAfee mostly done, the rest of the team gets back up and we're right back at it. A Doomsday European uppercut

drops Strong but Dunne is taken off the top with a super neckbreaker. There's a superplex to McAfee and they're all down again. Everyone gets together for the big staredown but it's McAfee going to the top of the cage for the HUGE flip dive onto everyone else for the huge crash.

O'Reilly and Dunne slug it out in the other ring with O'Reilly kicking away, only to get his fingers snapped. A suplex drops Dunne between the rings for two. McAfee grabs a chair and Cole tells him to do his best. Cole knocks it down and takes it away, only to get kicked low. Fish drives Burch through another table and Cole superkicks McAfee out of the air.

The Panama Sunrise plants McAfee for two in a heck of a false finish. The Last Shot misses McAfee but hits Lorcan instead. Dunne is back up with the Bitter End onto an open chair (geez) but O'Reilly kicks him down. A top rope knee onto a chair onto Lorcan's head gives the Era the pin at 45:06.

Rating: A-. It says a lot when a 45 minute match doesn't feel long and makes you feel every bit of the pain. I'm surprised at the Era winning but if McAfee isn't going to be around regularly (fair enough), there was little reason to have his team win. McAfee can come back when he wants and be the best heel in the company, which is probably going to keep him a lot more fresh. I'm not sure what is next for the Era now as there is nothing left for them to do, but dang they had a great one here. Awesome match and crazy brutal throughout, with the Era getting the win in the definitive NXT team battle.

A lot of posing takes us out.

Overall Rating: A-. Yeah it was great and I'm not sure what else there is to say about something like this. All five matches were good to great and I had an awesome time throughout. It's a heck of a show and worth seeing, though it didn't have that big show stealing match. Still though, this felt like a Takeover and that's as strong of an endorsement as

you're going to get.

Results

Team LeRae b. Team Blackheart – Superbomb to Shirai through a ladder

Tommaso Ciampa b. Timothy Thatcher – Willow's Bell

Dexter Lumis b. Cameron Grimes – Silence

Johnny Gargano b. Leon Ruff and Damian Priest – One Final beat to Ruff

Undisputed Era b. Team McAfee – Top rope knee to a chair to Lorcan

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NXT – October 29, 2020

(Halloween Havoc): Don't Boo This



IMG Credit: WWE

NXT

Date: October 28, 2020

Location: Capitol Wrestling Center, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Vic Joseph, Wade Barrett, Beth Phoenix

It's time to rekindle an awesome tradition (assuming that still counts twenty years later) with Halloween Havoc. For the life of me I don't know why it took WWE this long to bring the idea back but here we are, with a pair of Spin The Wheel Make The Deal matches for a title each. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks at tonight's card, while also showing the awesome WCW Halloween Havoc pumpkin set. Cool intro at least.

There's also a themed set, with a big (inflated and smiling) pumpkin and various leaves and branches everywhere. It looks rather good actually.

Here's Shotzi Blackheart, with....something shooting pyro and howling a lot to....well just kind of exist.

North American Title: Damian Priest vs. Johnny Gargano

Priest is defending and gets a live musical entrance. This is the first Spin The Wheel, Make The Deal match and for some reason, Gargano HATES wheels. He also hates pumpkins, as he stabs the inflatable pumpkin on the way to the ring. With that evil out of the way, Shotzi spins the wheel (which thankfully isn't digital like it was a few weeks ago) for a....Devil's Playground match.

We don't actually get any rules for the match but Priest starts hammering away in the corner. A toss around the ring has Gargano in more trouble and it's a Stinger Splash into a spinwheel kick for two. Gargano gets to the apron and tries the slingshot spear but Priest catches him in a front facelock. Instead, Gargano hammers away at the ribs as the announcers seem to say this is hardcore. Gargano whips out a kendo stick and we take a break.

Back with Gargano sticking away at Priest, who pulls out a nightstick to block a kick to the head. South of Heaven gets two and Priest sends him outside for a suicide dive. The chokeslam onto the barricade is countered and Gargano hits a Sliced Bread onto the steps. That's good for two and Priest is right back up with a Broken Arrow onto the announcers' table (showing that Vic is dressed as Where's Waldo).

They fight over to part of the set, with Gargano knocking a skeleton into a standing coffin. That earns him a bunch of strikes from Priest but Gargano whips out a fire extinguisher to blast Priest again. Gargano pours trashcan onto Priest, which just does not seem like a good idea.

We take another break and come back with the fight up by the Wheel but Priest can't powerbomb him to the wheel. Instead Gargano is back up with a superkick but Priest hits a spinning kick of his own. Priest is back up...and here's a guy in a Ghostface killer mask (from Scream) to deck Priest, allowing Gargano to hit a tornado DDT off the wheel. Ghostface hands a smiling Gargano a tombstone to knock Priest off the platform

and Gargano gets the title back at 20:55.

Rating: B-. I'm not sure what to say about this one as the Ghostface deal was a little bit weird. The rest of the match was a good enough hardcore brawl with both guys using various things fairly well. The set is a nice touch and makes things look that much better, though they only used it in the second half of the match. Gargano almost had to win here, though I'm curious to see who is under that mask for Priest to face next.

Gargano poses near the Wheel as Ghostface is gone.

We go to the commentators, with Joseph as Waldo and Barrett as his favorite wrestler: BAD NEWS BARRETT, complete with gavel.

We look back at the end of last week's show with Oney Lorcan and Danny Burch winning the Tag Team Titles, thanks to help from Pat McAfee.

Cameron Grimes is panicking about his match with Dexter Lumis but here's William Regal to say there's a van waiting to pick Grimes up. Grimes would rather go to the ring but Regal says it's time to go to the parking lot. Grimes: "That's the most dangerous place! That's more dangerous than the Bah Mitzvah Triangle!" Regal: "After you."

Here are McAfee, Lorcan and Burch for a chat. McAfee talks about how they don't get along on much but they all know that some fans of the Internet Wrestling Community (many of which are here tonight) are stupid. After McAfee had his first match and stole the show, Adam Cole didn't congratulate him but rather posed over him. McAfee made some mistakes that night and when he was on his way back to Indianapolis, all he could think about was Cole. He was too busy to come back and deal with Cole himself though, so it was time to make some phone calls.

First up was Ridge Holland, who just wanted a Mercedes to do what McAfee wanted. Then after Holland attacked Cole at

Takeover, Holland broke his leg in 700 pieces. With that out of the way, it was time to call Lorcan and Burch, but they couldn't be bought. They lost to the Undisputed Era and then it was time to talk about making a deal.

Cue Kyle O'Reilly...and here's Pete Dunne after him, carrying a pair of chairs. Dunne hands O'Reilly one of the chairs....and then blasts him with the other, because Dunne is with McAfee and company. The beatdown is on, with Dunne using the chair to snap O'Reilly's arm, followed by the elevated DDT onto the chair (or close to it at least) from the champs. This could make for a rather entertaining WarGames. Also, well done on tying in the Holland deal and explaining it while Holland is gone. What mattered here though was McAfee, who was fantastic and is already one of the best celebrity heels ever.

Grimes is still trying to talk his way out of the match with Lumis but Regal lets him go outside on his own. After going outside, it's off to a rather creepy van, with an even creepier person in the passenger's seat. The back door opens though and it's MICHAEL HAYES, with BADSTREET playing, saying it's time to go. They get in the van and drive off, which is never a good sign.

Santos Escobar vs. Jake Atlas

Non-title and the rest of Legado del Fantasma are here too. Escobar (with half of his face painted and some Rey Mysterio Halloween Havoc 1997 tribute tights) starts fast by whipping Atlas into the corner but Atlas gets in a shot. Some trash talk from Escobar earns himself a shot to the face and right hands in the corner. There's a backdrop and a discus forearm gets two on Escobar. The Cartwheel DDT connects but Legado puts Escobar's foot on the rope. Atlas dives onto both of them but Escobar gets in a headbutt. The double underhook facebuster finishes Atlas at 3:29.

Rating: C-. It was fun while it lasted but it didn't last

long. I do like the idea of having Atlas take it to Escobar while he could before ultimately falling to the numbers. What we got here did work well enough though and I could go for more of Atlas. He has come a long way in a short amount of time and it wouldn't shock me if he got a title shot sooner or later.

Ember Moon doesn't like Dakota Kai getting involved in her match. Kai has grown up a lot while Moon was gone but the kicks won't be enough.

Shotzi tells us to stick around and howls some more.

Back with Shotzi sending us to the Haunted House Of Terror.

Dexter Lumis vs. Cameron Grimes

Cinematic time with Grimes looking rather nervous to go near a house. He says that he's coming for Lumis and is NOT scared. Grimes keeps watching and Lumis is shown watching from a tree. It's time to go inside where Grimes finds...a mounted deer and a tricycle riding itself. Grimes: "YOU GOT KIDS???" Now it's a scary referee terrifying Grimes but here's Lumis to grab him by the throat for some choking. A window is broken as Grimes gets away to hide in a bathroom. There's a woman in the shower, which certainly gets Grimes' attention (Grimes: "I didn't realize that Lumis had a sister.")

Grimes goes to join her and it's a demon woman who might be from the Ring. Grimes staggers out and Lumis reaches through a window with the Silencer. That's broken up as well so Grimes grabs a stick of some kind but the demon woman scares him. Another woman jumps onto his back so Grimes runs outside and throws her off a bridge. The referee, a woman and someone else show up to chase him off to the van...with Lumis driving him away. To be continued.

Rhea Ripley vs. Raquel Gonzalez

They are ready to tear into each other before the bell and the slugout is on with Rhea throwing hands in a hurry. Gonzalez takes her into the corner but Rhea blocks a right hand and hits a headbutt. They go nose to nose to shout at each other and then shove each other a bit. The slap off sets up another slugout until Rhea slips out of a suplex. Neither can get a fireman's carry so Rhea goes with a running dropkick to the floor. A dropkick through the ropes puts Gonzalez down again, but she catches a dive and hits a powerbomb against the barricade.

Back from a break with Gonzalez working on something like a Gory Stretch until Rhea counters into a sunset flip. A clothesline gives Gonzalez two but Rhea is back up with some knees to the face. Rhea scores with a basement dropkick to the back of the head for two and stomps her down to set up the Prism Trap. That's broken up though and Gonzalez grabs a spinning powerslam for two.

Gonzalez takes it up top but has to knee her way out of the super Riptide. They slap it out again until Gonzalez hits a running choke throw off the top for two more (with Rhea's face looking completely stunned on the landing). The powerbomb is countered into a headscissors into the middle buckle though and now it's Riptide for the pin at 12:52.

Rating: B. It wasn't their cage match but again it felt like a fight and that's what they were going for here. These two beat the heck out of each other and it's nice to see someone who isn't physically dominated by Ripley for a change. I'm not sure what is left for Ripley but other than the title, what else could she really want in NXT?

Cameron Grimes is running back to the arena. How did he know the way back?

Drake Maverick is Hollywood Hogan, complete with 2.4 inch pythons. He and Killian Dain have tag team gold on their mind,

though he thinks that McKenzie Mitchell is Mean Gene. Maverick: "Come on McKenzie. It's Halloween." The Giant and the Yeti show up to repeat the big double hug (albeit from the wrong sides) but Dain as the Shockmaster (egads) walks in for the save. Drake isn't happy with some of Dain's issues with the team and puts on the helmet, only to fall over. Dain: "He fell on his a***!" Ok that was good.

Grimes is back at the arena, suggesting that they could have gotten to the house with a brisk walk rather than using the van.

After a quick chat with the announcers, Grimes is back in the arena and in the graveyard, where the demon woman is back as well. The other demon woman joins her and Grimes shouts that they better stop because he's Cameron Grimes. Lumis pops up behind him in the ring and Lumis throws him into the corner. A spinebuster plants Grimes as commentary wants to know where the smoke is coming from. The demons get in the ring and grab Lumis' legs but more of them are coming in as well. Grimes hits a Cave In on one of the demons but Lumis throws another one at him. The Silencer finishes Grimes at 36:55.

Rating: D. The house stuff was good but it was dragged down by the fact that it was Dexter Lumis. I know I say this every week but egads he's one of the least interesting people I've seen NXT push since Kona Reeves. Grimes was the star of this though as he has more charisma and energy than he knows what to do with and thankfully NXT is featuring him a lot more. If nothing else just have him do the Cave In a lot because that's awesome.

Video on Candice LeRae vs. Io Shirai and all of the matches they could have.

Tommaso Ciampa does not recognize this NXT because it has been out with the old and in with the new. This isn't Monopoly and we aren't taking turns. If you're hungry, come to the top.

Everyone wants to blame someone else for what they don't have and it's all the same message. It's the brass ring and the glass ceiling and Ciampa has heard it all before. He was never handed anything and this all begins with Velvetene Dream. The 25 year old prodigy is oozing the it factor. If you hit Ciampa with a cast once, shame on him, but if you hit Ciampa with a cast twice, you're a dead man. Ciampa's star power is awesome.

Women's Title: Candice LeRae vs. Io Shirai

Shirai is defending and Poppy plays her to the ring. Shotzi spins the wheel and it's...Tables, Ladders and Scares. Shirai starts fast and hits a suicide dive to the floor as the title is raised up. Candice comes back with a table...and finds a bunch of severed body parts. Shirai hits her with a bloody arm but gets sent into a ladder (with orange rungs of course). They fight over to the announcers' table with Candice hitting her in the face (or arm as the replay shows) with a laptop.

Candice bridges a ladder between the ring and the announcers' table but Shirai throws a chair into the general area of her head. Some running knees against the steps have Candice in more trouble so Shirai grabs more chairs. A chair shot takes LeRae down and we take a break. Back with two tables (with chalk outlines) having been set up (over the severed body parts) and both women throwing in a ladder. Shirai gets knocked down and Candice's ladder is set up in the corner but Shirai grabs a butterfly backbreaker.

Candice rolls away from the moonsault though and Shirai crashes onto the chairs. A chair is set up and Candice asks if she remembers this, but Shirai suplexes her onto the open chair. Shirai is back up with the running knees in the corner but they only hit ladder, which then falls onto her for a negative bonus. Candice gets caught on top though and Shirai loads up a pair of chairs. The big crash is broken up but Shirai wraps a chair around Candice's leg and twists it around in a creative spot.

The 619 misses though and Candice hits her in the back with a chair. Mrs. LeRae's Wild Ride through the tables leaves them both laying...and here's the Ghostface again. Whoever is it (is looks to be a woman) helps Candice to the top of the ladder but Shotzi runs in to give Ghostface an electric chair off the ladder and onto the chairs. Shirai grabs her own ladder and goes up as well but Candice shoves her down. The ladder is turned over to send Candice through the bridged ladder at ringside and Shirai retains at 16:29.

Rating: B. Your tastes may vary here but they beat the absolute fire out of each other for a long time here. I was actually surprised when Shirai retained but it was a great way to get there. Shirai winning here makes her seem like a bigger star as champion and that's a lot better than having her be the person who gives the title to Candice so Rhea can chase it. This was one of the most violent women's matches I've seen in a very long time and it was a rather good one at that.

Post match Shirai poses and here's Gargano to check on Candice.

Overall Rating: A-. Now that felt like a special show and the atmosphere did all kinds of great things. They had the cool set, the creepy (at times) atmosphere and two bookend matches to make it that much better. Throw in the Ghostface deal (which is likely Indi Hartwell) and you had a heck of a night. If you get rid of the Dexter Lumis push, this is one of the best shows in a very long time but otherwise, it's just a long time. Check out that main event, but McAfee's promo should come first. This was the NXT that I've liked for a long time and hopefully it leads to more, as it hasn't been this sharp for a good while.

Results

Johnny Gargano b. Damian Priest – Tombstone to the head

Santos Escobar b. Jake Atlas – Double underhook facebuster

Rhea Ripley b. Raquel Gonzalez – Riptide

Dexter Lumis b. Cameron Grimes – Silencer

Io Shirai b. Candice LeRae – Shirai pulled down the title

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