

Takeover: Chicago Preview

When I heard about "Takeover: Chicago" taking place only about six weeks after "Takeover: Orlando", I wasn't all that thrilled with the concept. These shows work best when they have time to be built up instead of rushing things together like this. Then again, the idea of Takeover in Chicago is too much to pass up. It also helps that the show has been well built up in such a short amount of time and I'm actually looking forward to a lot of the card. Let's get to it.

United Kingdom Title: Tyler Bate vs. Pete Dunne

We'll start with a match that feels a bit tacked on for the sake of filling in a spot on the card. Bate defeated Dunne to become the inaugural champion back in January and has held the title ever since. Dunne became #1 contender on the recent "UK Championship Special" and the match was set for here. These two have been circling each other for a good while now and it makes sense for them to have a major rematch.

I see no reason for Dunne not to walk away with the title here. Bate was the feel good story of the tournament but Dunne seems to be the much more well rounded performer. Let him take Bate more seriously this time and give him a few Bitter Endings to wrap up the champ's unbeaten streak. This should be a lot of fun and I have a feeling the Chicago crowd will eat it up, but the ending really shouldn't be in any sort of doubt.

Tag Team Titles: Authors of Pain vs. DIY

Now this one took an interesting (and disappointing) turn over the last few days as Tommaso Ciampa injured his leg/ankle at a house show in Highland Heights, Kentucky. That's normally something that can be worked around but it's a bigger issue here with the ladder match stipulation. Either way, these teams have feuded for months and there's an interesting potential to this match that you almost always feel around the tag division.

That being said, I think the Authors of Pain retain the titles here.

The situation seems too perfect for DIY to get the titles back and that often means that there's going to be a bit of a swerve. NXT did it in Orlando as the odds were stacked against the Authors and it might be the case again here. I'll take the Authors to retain and the more I think about it, the more confident I feel in it.

Roderick Strong vs. Eric Young

This is the only non-title match on the card and it feels like one of the more important ones. There's been a wave of new talent in NXT as of late and these two, along with Aleister Black and Drew McIntyre, have been some of the main players. I was worried that all four of them would miss the show but two out of four are better than none. Young and his Sanity group have been feuding with Strong and a variety of partners for months now and with Tye Dillinger up on the main roster, Strong is a logical target.

I can't imagine Young goes over here as Strong has been pushed as a big player and it doesn't make sense to have him lose in his first big Takeover singles match. Strong could easily become a contender to the NXT Title in the very near future and it would do him a lot of good to have him win here. The match should be fun too as both guys know how to go at a fast pace and put on an entertaining performance, but there's no real reason to have Young get the win.

Women's Title: Asuka vs. Nikki Cross vs. Ruby Riot

I actually got to see this match at the aforementioned Highland Heights house show on Thursday night and it was certainly entertaining. While it's clear that the injury to Ember Moon has completely changed things around, it's not out of the question that the title could change hands here. Riot and Cross are both just crazy enough to give Asuka a real challenge. Asuka doesn't seem to know what to do when things get crazy, but she does always have the option of kicking someone in the head.

That's what I see happening here, likely with a big kick to Cross' head. Asuka seems destined to drop the title to Moon and with her not here, there's no reason to have Asuka lose and then get the title back so she can lose to Moon all over again. Just let Asuka

win here and then build up to the second showdown with Moon. Asuka has been working well in her new heel role and having her cheat to retain here would further that new stance even more. So yeah, the champ retains.

NXT Title: Bobby Roode vs. Hideo Itami

This one is interesting as well with the champ not really having a top challenger and Itami filling in the role due to necessity rather than being the best possible candidate. If nothing else, and it's kind of sad to have to say this, it almost has to be now for Itami because there's no way of telling when he'll suffer another horrible injury that will put him on the shelf for several months.

I'll go with Roode winning here, but the place is going to lose it when Itami hits the GTS. As annoying as it's going to be, they're going to chant for CM Punk because they don't care that Itami invented the move. No, instead let's focus on someone who won't be there instead of what you paid to see because he's the one thing that would make them happy, at least until five minutes had passed and they were sick to death of him too and started chanting for JBL or something.

Overall, this show feels like it has a steep hill to climb but it's capable of doing so. The matches are interesting though I really do wish they had gotten Black and McIntyre on there, even in a quick squash each. The UK Title match should be fun but it doesn't quite fit on the card, especially with what feels like more important talent that could use the spotlight. All that being said, this show should be fun and that's really what matters most with these things.

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NXT – February 22, 2017: The Wrestling Version

NXT

Date: February 22, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Percy Watson, Nigel McGuinness

We're getting closer and closer to Orlando as we're...well we're still in Orlando but it's not the big show yet. Tonight's big deal is a triple threat match for the #1 contendership to the Women' Title as Asuka is in need of some more competition. It's hard to say what else we've got coming up around here and that's a good thing as you could be in for a good surprise. Let's get to it.

In Memory of George Steele.

Quick video on the triple threat.

Opening sequence.

Liv Morgan vs. Peyton Royce vs. Ember Moon

#1 contenders match and Morgan is in Space Jam Tune Squad inspired gear. Moon gets sent to the floor to start and Morgan does a Matrix move to avoid the a spinning kick. The two of them head outside and Ember hits a dive over the top to take Morgan down. We take an early break and come back with Morgan taking Peyton's long legged choke in the corner.

Peyton sends her to the apron and puts on something like a full

nelson with her legs before letting it go to put Ember back on the floor. Morgan comes back with an ankle scissors out of the corner for one but can't follow up because it's just an ankle scissors. The real comeback starts with a kick in the corner and a bulldog, finally drawing Ember in for the save.

A headscissors puts Moon right back outside though and it's time for a superplex. Peyton isn't fast enough though as Ember sneaks in to make it a Tower of Doom and all three are down. Moon loads up the Eclipse but Billie Kay takes it instead of Morgan, leaving Peyton to knee Ember in the face. A fisherman's suplex to Morgan is good for the pin and the title shot at 11:54.

Rating: C+. That's really the only option as Morgan has already been destroyed by Asuka and I'd assume they're keeping Moon for a big showdown. The idea here was to keep Moon on the floor because otherwise it would have been her dominating the other two and slipping on a banana peel to lose in the end. Royce winning is the right call though I can't imagine that title shot comes before Takeover.

Video on Pete Dunne and Mark Andrews.

Kassius Ohno is coming back.

Shinsuke Nakamura is healing up.

Mark Andrews vs. Pete Dunne

Rematch from the tournament where Dunne beat Andrews. Dunne goes straight for the fingers to start and then rips at the nose like a true heel. Andrews pops back up and sends him to the floor for a moonsault armdrag to take over. A second attempt doesn't work though and Dunne forearms him in the jaw, followed by stomping the fingers onto the steps.

We take a break and come back with Andrews flipping Dunne over and grabbing a springboard hurricanrana. Dunne is ready for the shooting star though and forearms Andrews out of the air. The X Plex gets two but Andrews gets out of the Bitter End. A reverse hurricanrana of all things puts Dunne down again. Another Bitter End is reversed

into a small package for two and the X Plex is countered into the Stundog Millionaire. Dunne gets the knees up on the shooting star though and the Bitter End wraps Andrews up at 13:52.

Rating: B+. This was very good stuff and the wrestling was enough to overcome the lack of a story coming in. In theory this sets up Dunne as the first real challenger to Bate but it's not clear if anyone from outside the UK can challenge for the UK Title. You can also add Andrews to the list of people TNA screwed up horribly.

Kay and Royce are ready to take the Women's Title back to Australia. Patrick Clark is in action next week.

Tye Dillinger is ready for Sanity, no matter what they throw at him.

No Way Jose vs. Bobby Roode

Non-title and Roode's entrance is reaching Undertaker lengths. Roode takes him to the mat to start and slaps the afro a bit. Back up and it's dance time with a clothesline freaking Roode out a bit. The big spinebuster plants Jose again though and we take a break. Back with Roode striking the pose and grabbing a chinlock. Jose makes his comeback and cleans house with chops and a cobra clutch slam. The big right hand puts Roode on the floor but he comes back in and hits the Glorious DDT for the pin at 10:39.

Rating: C+. This was the kind of match that Roode needed. Jose is going to be fine with a loss to the champ and Roode gets a win over someone with some credibility. That being said, the credibility isn't going to last all that long if he never wins a match anytime soon. Good enough though and a third solid match on a good show.

Post match Roode goes after the knee until Kassius Ohno makes a big return for the save. Roode asks who Ohno is so Kassius talks about how he's been around the world. Now Ohno wants what Roode has, so Bobby is willing to put the title on the line right now. Roode gets in a cheap shot and starts in on the knee, only to get knocked out to the floor for his efforts. Ohno poses to end the show. Ohno got a strong reaction (not quite Nakamura but still a star level reception) and that's a good thing as he's likely going to be in the

title scene very soon.

Overall Rating: A-. This was the pure wrestling show with almost no storyline development but three strong matches in the span of an hour. Sometimes you just need a long show with a lot of good wrestling and that's what took place here. I had a good time with this and it went by fast, especially with the big angle to end the show. NXT needed a show like this and it worked very well.

Results

Peyton Royce b. Ember Moon and Liv Morgan – Fisherman's suplex to Morgan

Pete Dunne b. Mark Andrews – Bitter End

Bobby Roode b. No Way Jose – Glorious DDT

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WWE UK Title Tournament Day Two – January 15, 2017: He

Rules Britannia

WWE UK Tournament

Date: January 15, 2017

Location: Empress Ballroom, Blackpool, England

Commentators: Michael Cole, Nigel McGuinness

We're back with the second and final day of the tournament where we're see the first champion crowned. The first day was more fun than I was expecting with some good action and a few personalities getting to stand out. I'm not sure who is getting the title but that makes it a lot more fun. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last night's show. Seems appropriate.

Recap of Pete Dunne attacking Sam Gradwell along with their first round matches.

The second round has twenty minute time limits.

Quarterfinals: Pete Dunne vs. Sam Gradwell

Gradwell, with tape on his back after the attack from yesterday, goes right after him to start and clotheslines Dunne to the floor. That means a big suicide dive and Dunne is sprawled all over the place. A butterfly suplex on the ramp has Pete in more trouble as the story from last night has already done this match a lot of good. A missile dropkick drops Dunne but hurts Sam's back as well.

The back is fine enough for a Michinoku Driver for two on Dunne as this is one sided so far. Pete rolls outside and takes a crossbody with the fans getting WAY into Gradwell. Back in and Dunne shoves him off the ropes for a big crash onto the apron, messing up the back all over again. Gradwell dives back in to beat the count but gets slammed into the corner to give Pete the pin at 4:50.

Rating: B-. This was all about the storytelling which is the most important thing you can get around here. The story with the back injury made things interesting and Pete came off as the real villain of the whole thing, which is a perfect role for him. I bought the idea that he wanted to win no matter what the cost and that gives him a character going forward.

Dunne says he was making a name for himself last night and that's not controversial.

We look at Joseph Conners and Mark Andrews' first round matches.

Quarterfinals: Joseph Conners vs. Mark Andrews

Andrews starts with some very fast rollups for two each but Conners elbows him in the face to cut off the offense. Joseph tries his own sunset flip, only to have Mark roll through and dropkick him down for two more. That sends Joseph outside but he avoids a moonsault off the apron and drop toeholds Andrews into the steps.

The fans are entirely behind Andrews and an enziguri staggers Joseph enough to give Mark a breather. Andrews sends him into the steps to even things up and there's a cannonball off the barricade for good measure. Back in and Andrews' standing moonsault hits knees and a slingshot Downward Spiral (cool) gives Conners two. Joseph takes too long putting Andrews on top though and a super hurricanrana brings him down. The Stunner out of a suplex (Stundog Millionaire) knocks Conners silly and the shooting star sends Andrews to the final four at 8:14.

Rating: C+. As much as I didn't like Andrews in TNA, it's rather amazing to see how much more interesting he is when he doesn't have TNA holding him down. I mean, he's not great or anything but he's perfectly watchable, which is a HUGE improvement over being one of the least interesting guys I've seen in such a long time.

Wolfgang and Trent Seven first round recaps. Cole mistakenly says Seven beat Roy Johnson in the first round.

Fit Finlay is here.

Quarterfinals: Wolfgang vs. Trent Seven

They start slow for a change until Seven slaps him in the face. That earns him a suplex and they head outside to start the brawl. A moonsault off the barricade crushes Seven but Wolfgang bangs up his knee. A suicide dive drops Wolfgang again but he comes right back with a superplex to put both guys down.

The Seven Star Lariat is countered into Wasteland, only to have Wolfgang miss the moonsault. Another Seven Star actually connects for just two so Seven actually tries a super piledriver. Since there's no way that's happening, Wolfgang headbutts him down and hits the Howling (Swanton Bomb) for the pin and the big upset at 6:43.

Rating: C+. This was a better performance from Wolfgang than last

night and I'm really surprised at the upset as Seven looked like a threat to win the whole thing. It's a good match though the surprise that Seven went out that fast is pretty jarring. At least we had a surprise though and that's a good thing.

Jordan (not George as Cole puts it) Devlin and Tyler Bate first round recaps.

Quarterfinals: Jordan Devlin vs. Tyler Bate

Bate tweaks his mustache instead of shaking hands, earning himself a forearm to the back of the head to start us off. That doesn't last long as Devlin is knocked to the floor for a suicide dive, only to have Devlin start in on the arms. A monkey flip gets Bate out of trouble and a middle rope elbow to the jaw gets two. Devlin actually hits Bate in the face with the rope, only to miss a moonsault. The Tyler Driver 97 is countered with a hurricanrana but the second attempt sends Bate to the semifinals at 6:06.

Rating: C. Bate is very up and down but the time issues are causing problems on this show. There's only so much that can be done in a six minute match, especially with people we have less than ten minutes of time with in the first place. Devlin going out this early is a surprise but at least the fans are responding to Bate and he has a great finisher.

I love the little wave that Bate does.

Here are the updated brackets:

Pete Dunne

Mark Andrews

Wolfgang

Tyler Bate

Video on the final four and how they want to win.

Robbie Brookside is here.

Semifinals: Pete Dunne vs. Mark Andrews

Dunne takes him straight to the mat and grabs a chinlock but a spinning armdrag sends Pete to the floor. That of course means a big flip dive as Andrews has shown me more in the last two matches than in his entire TNA run. As usual, I blame TNA. Pete bends the fingers back and goes for the stomp on the steps but Andrews snaps off a

hurricanrana to take over again.

A standing 450 moonsault (GEEZ) gets two on Dunne and a springboard hurricanrana sends him outside again. Didn't we just see this? Andrews' latest dive is caught and dropped onto the apron, followed by a release suplex (the X Plex) onto the ramp. That's still not enough to get a countout so Dunne stomps away on the head. Back in and yet another X Plex is countered into the Stundog Millionaire (that name is rapidly losing its charm).

Dunne has a counter of his own though as the shooting star is reversed into a rollup for a very close two. The pumphandle Downward Spiral (Bitter End) is broken up and the fifth or so X Plex is countered into the fourth or so hurricanrana for two. Another shooting star misses and ANOTHER FREAKING X PLEX sets up the Bitter End to send Dunne on at 10:45.

Rating: B-. This match is going to get high praise and I get why but DANG I was getting tired of that stupid X Plex in the second half of the match. I don't like it when Lesnar does the same suplex over and over and Dunne is the same way. It's still entertaining enough but this is going to be praised to death for one of the things that gets on my nerves more than anything else.

Cole and McGuinness talk about their media coverage over the last few days.

Semifinals: Wolfgang vs. Tyler Bate

They talk trash for the first minute plus until Bate is driven into the corner. That earns Wolfgang some hard shots to what might be a broken nose. Bate is too small to pick him up though and Wolfgang takes him down again. The middle rope moonsault misses again and Bate kicks him in the nose. You don't kick a guy named Wolfgang in the face so he grabs a gorilla press into a powerslam (which the announcers say is like a Pop Up Powerbomb). The Howling is WAY off though and the Tyler Driver 97 ends Wolfgang at 6:00.

Rating: D+. Maybe it's just overkill but I'm having some issues caring for either of these guys. Bate is small and young enough to make for an interesting character in this big underdog run and that's all you can do with some of these characters. Bate vs. Dunne is a solid little story and I'm sure the match will be good. Watchable match here but the clock issues keep hurting things.

Wolfgang shakes hands post match and leaves, allowing Dunne to come out here and send Bate shoulder first into the post. Regal comes out to chase him off with Dunne PANICKING. At least there's something for the finals.

Nigel, a good commentator, tells us that Dunne uses an arm hold. Above all else, that felt natural instead of like they were hammering it over our heads. Simple, yet effective.

Medics check on Bate who finally sits up. The shocked look on his face is a nice touch.

Here's Neville for a match but first he's got something to say. Neville gets a HUGE ovation but he talks about being forgotten by everyone, including the UK fans here in this tournament. Of course he wasn't allowed to enter because otherwise it wouldn't have been a contest. There isn't a man in this kingdom or on this continent that deserves to be across the ring from him and of course that means theme music.

Neville vs. Tommy End

Feeling out process to start as we hear about End being trained by Kassius Ohno, who has been re-signed in the last few weeks. End snapmares him down and sits on the mat for an awkward staredown. Neville is sent outside for more strike exchanges with End coming out on the bad side for a change. We hit a chinlock back inside (it would be odd to do it outside) as we hear a voiceover talking about...there being no updates on Bate's condition.

The running kick to the side of End's head gets two but Neville dives into a kick to his own head. End gets in even more strikes and sends him outside for a middle rope moonsault. Cole: "Who says Tommy End can't fly?" Uh, no one so far Cole. A spinning kick to the head (following a good fake) sets up a German suplex for two on Neville. End loads up something on the top but gets hurricanranaed back down, setting up the Red Arrow for the pin at 8:39.

Rating: C. Not bad here and Neville winning was the only possible outcome given that he has a pay per view title shot coming up. End was fine and I'm sure NXT will do a better job of building him up than a special like this. It's a perfectly fine match and I'm digging heel Neville more and more every single week.

Bate has a separated AC joint but he's fighting anyway.

Here's Finn Balor (rocking the heck out of a suit) for a chat before the main event. Balor puts the tournament over and the fans decide that they deserve it. It's time for the finals.

Well, it will be after we look at how both guys got to the title match.

UK Title: Pete Dunne vs. Tyler Bate

William Regal is in the ring with the belt and Bate is coming in with a very bad shoulder. A lockup doesn't go anywhere to start so Dunne slaps him in the face, earning an ANGRY 19 year old stare. Bate's wristlock doesn't go anywhere so Dunne goes to the first armbar. Bate comes back with a dropkick to stagger Dunne and there go the fans with their chanting all over again.

It's off to an ankle twist to slow Dunne down as Cole starts reading Tweets. They head outside with Tyler flat out winning a slugout, which is rather surprising. Back in again and Pete finally kicks him in the arm, only to get sent into the post for his efforts. A quick exploder sends Dunne flying but the shoulder is too gone for the Tyler Driver. The airplane spin (with three different rotations) gives Bate two but he gets caught in a triangle choke.

That doesn't work either so Bate knocks him to the floor for a Fosbury Flop of all things. A 450 lands in a stomp (not clear if that was intentional) but Dunne kicks out again. The Bitter End is only good for two and the fans are WAY into this, as they should be. It's off to the double wristlock (Kimura) with Dunne wrapped around Tyler's body but Bate muscles him up into a brainbuster. They slug it out again and Tyler kicks him in the head, setting up the Tyler Driver for the pin and the title at 15:12.

Rating: A-. That might be a bit high but I got WAY more into this than I was expecting to. Bate winning is a nice choice and having him beat Dunne was as good of a story as they were going to be able to pull off. This was a much better match than I was expecting and this is the kind of match the tournament was needing to make it memorable. Great main event and Bate looked like a star despite his age.

HHH, Finlay, Regal and Balor present Bate with the title to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. I liked this one a lot more than the previous

night and it's a good way to wrap the thing up. Given that the title isn't likely to mean much in WWE, this was perfect for a two day event that really doesn't mean much in the big picture. It leaves a door open for WWE in the UK and that's really all they wanted so it's hard to complain. I liked the matches well enough and some people made their names so it's definitely a success.

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WWE UK Tournament – January 14, 2017 (Day One): More Than I Was Expecting

WWE UK Tournament

Date: January 14, 2017

Location: Empress Ballroom, Blackpool, England

Commentators: Michael Cole, Nigel McGuinness

This is an interesting one as the WWE is trying to break into the British market by holding a sixteen man tournament over the course of two days. The winner will be crowned the first ever WWE UK Champion with the possibility of further tournaments taking place in Asia and Mexico based on the success here. Let's get to it.

Let's get this out of the way: I don't know most of these people and I'm basically going off what WWE tells me about them. I think I prefer it that way too.

All matches today will be first round matches so I won't bother listing them as such.

We look at various WWE moments in the UK over the years, including Summerslam 1992 and Takeover: London.

HHH, sporting the biggest beard I've ever seen on him, comes to the stage to welcome us to the show. He talks about building empires and asks if we're ready.

The arena looks very cool and actually feels grand for a change.

We look at the brackets.

Video on Trent Seven, complete with clips Progress Wrestling.

Video on H.C. Dyer, who seems to be a boxer/striker.

All first round matches have a fifteen minute time limit.

Trent Seven vs. H.C. Dyer

Trent likes his mustache and is a current Progress Wrestling Tag Team Champion (as mentioned by Cole which is very strange to hear). Dyer dropkicks him down and they head to the floor for some chops. Back in and Seven does a running chop of all things before a suplex gets two (with a feel of the mustache at the same time).

Dyer gets in a spinebuster for two of his own and that big right hand gets another delayed near fall. Something like a Blue Thunder Bomb gets two more as Nigel is taking issue with Dyer's weak covers. So he's the British Gorilla Monsoon. Back up and a spinning backfist sets up the Seven Star Lariat (Rainmaker) to put Dyer away at 7:28.

Rating: C. This was fine and you can tell they want to give Seven quite the push. Dyer has a good look but you could tell he was in trouble when the one move he talked about only got a near fall. The wrestling was fine, albeit a bit generic, which is going to be the case in a lot of these matches because there's no story here other than the tournament.

Video on Danny Burch, who wrestled on NXT as a pretty tough jobber for a few years.

Video on Jordan Devlin, who is Finn Balor's protege.

Balor is in the front row.

Danny Burch vs. Jordan Devlin

They trade arm holds to start with Burch pulling him out of the air by the leg (that's a new one) but not following up on it. Nigel does not approve and Devlin takes over, meaning we might need to listen to Nigel some more. Burch gets pulled off the middle rope for two and it's off to the chinlock. A pull of the back of the head puts Burch down as Devlin is certainly the heel here.

Devlin gets annoyed at the fans and rakes the eyes to keep Danny in check. Danny comes back with a middle rope dropkick but actually loses a slugout. One heck of a clothesline drops Jordan for two and we hit the Crossface to give Devlin a very scared look. A spinning head kick (think Trouble in Paradise) knocks Burch silly and cuts his head open. The referee counts to three at 8:48, even though Burch's shoulder was up, which seems like a way to stop the match for the cut.

Rating: D+. I wasn't feeling this one as much and the somewhat botched ending didn't do it any favors. Devlin didn't feel like the most natural heel in the world and it was kind of hard to care about him. Burch felt more natural but that cut on the head looked rather nasty at the same time.

Devlin knocks him down again after the match and insists that was a clean win.

Video on Saxton Huxley, who is very intelligent.

Video on Sam Gradwell, who grew up with an alcoholic mom and all he cares about is what happens in the ring.

Saxton Huxley vs. Sam Gradwell

Technical sequence to start with Gradwell working on an armbar followed by a dropkick for two. A butterfly backbreaker puts Sam

down as the fans are now singing about Huxley. Some shots to the face drop Huxley and a good looking top rope headbutt sends Gradwell on at 6:03.

Rating: C-. How in the world was that a six minute match? It felt like they had barely been out there for a minute and a half but the match was fine enough. Gradwell got my attention and that's a good sign going forward. Good match here, though the crowd mostly spent the match mentioning how much Huxley looks like Jesus.

Dave Taylor is at ringside.

Video on Pete Dunne, who is known as the Bruiserweight. He describes himself as unique and enjoys hurting people.

Video on Roy Johnson, who is the most wavy guy in wrestling. If you don't know what that is, we're not talking about it. He's a power guy.

Pete Dunne vs. Roy Johnson

Disclaimer: Johnson used to post on the same forums I run so I'm very biased in this one. Dunne takes him down and cranks on the fingers but a shoulder has no effect. Johnson dances at him and gets slapped in the face, only to get muscled up into a suplex. They head outside with Pete crushing the hand against the steps.

Back in and Dunne bends the arm back as he's picking Johnson apart here. Dunne even takes off the glove and cranks on the hand some more. A flapjack and middle rope shoulder put Dunne down though and a Samoa drop gets two. Roy jumps into a stiff right hand for two followed by an enziguri for the same. Johnson gets in a Big Ending for two more but gets caught in a pumphandle flatliner to give Dunne the pin at 7:45.

Rating: B-. Good match here with Johnson surviving longer than it seemed he would have. It's clear that Dunne is going to be a big deal in this tournament and the announcers made it clear that Johnson was in over his head here. Still though, solid match and Johnson did better than I was expecting.

Dunne won't shake hands post match.

Video on Wolfgang, who has always wanted to be here. He's the lone Scottish representative here.

Video on Tyson T-Bone who wants to fight and honor his gypsy heritage.

T-Bone talks about traveling the world earning a living with his fans and all that matters is who is up next.

Wolfgang vs. Tyson T-Bone

Tyson headbutts him during the introductions and the fight is on early. Wolfgang gets in a few shots of his own but a suplex and hard whip into the corner give Tyson a near fall. Tyson's suplex is reversed into one from Wolfgang, followed by Wasteland. A middle rope moonsault gives Wolfgang two but Tyson posts him for an eight count on the floor. Back in and Wolfgang breaks up a superplex, setting up a Swanton Bomb for the pin at 6:18.

Rating: C-. Not great stuff here but the ending was quite the surprise. They had built Tyson up as a big star and then he just lost clean in the end. T-Bone wasn't the most impressive guy in the world but he looked a bit more impressive than Wolfgang, who didn't do much for me here. This wasn't terrible but I've seen worse.

Wolfgang says the title is coming home with the big bad wolf.

Video on Joseph Conners, who is missing part of his ear due to a fight.

Video on James Drake who has wrestled people from all over the world and gotten paid to win. People will be talking about him when he wins.

Joseph Conners vs. James Drake

They lock up to start and actually go to the mat without breaking the hold. Drake goes after the missing ear before blasting Joseph with a clothesline. A double stomp out of the corner stops Drake as Cole keeps changing from Conners to Connor. Back in and Conners changes gears a bit by going after Drake's ear. Not that it's injured in the first place or anything but it seems to be working. After a chinlock goes nowhere, Drake unloads on him in the corner

and gets two off an enziguri. Connors drives him into the corner and grabs a lifting delayed flatliner (Don't Look Down) for the pin at 7:19.

Rating: C+. This was a bit weird as the ear thing kept going but at least the match was physical and ended with a bit of a surprise. It's one of the better matches of the tournament so far and the announcers thought it would be the best. I've seen Connors before and I've liked what I've seen so far.

Video on Mark Andrews, who wants to prove Wales proud. You might know him as Mandrews in TNA.

Video on Dan Moloney, who is from a very dark place and shouldn't say what he's seen.

Mandrews has been an underdog his whole life but he's willing to fight.

Dan Moloney vs. Mark Andrews

Moloney is only 19. Andrews starts early with the flips and scores with a basement dropkick into an armbar. Dan throws him into the air for a crash and near fall but Andrews stomps on the ribs to take over again. The fans seem to like Andrews who gets two off a standing moonsault. Dan tries something like an F5 but seems to slip up, only to hit a sitout F5 on the second attempt. A running kick to the face gets two but Andrews grabs a Stunner to put Dan down. The shooting star press advances Moloney at 5:45.

Rating: C-. I've never gotten the appeal of Andrews as there are just people better at the exact same style. Then again that might have been due to him being in TNA under the name of Mandrews, which has never sounded anything but dumb. He was a lot better here though and the high flying was a nice change of pace.

Video on Tucker, who is a technical wrestler.

Video on Tyler Bate, who is 19 and only cares about the 1-2-3.

Tucker vs. Tyler Bate

Feeling out process to start with both guys missing (not botching) a

few moves early on. Bate offers a test of strength but just suckers Tucker in for a left hand to the jaw. Tucker comes right back with a middle rope elbow to the face but Bate grabs a headlock, picks up his own foot and puts it onto Tucker's head. It's off to a cravate for a good while until Tucker kicks him in the head, giving us an amusing look on Bate's face.

Bate comes right back with a middle rope uppercut and another one stops Tucker's suicide dive. A hurricanrana off the steps puts Bate down but we go very old school with an airplane spin (in both directions) on Tucker. The Super Duper Kick knocks Bate silly but also out to the floor, meaning it's only good for two. Back up and a rolling kick to Tucker's head sets up the Tyler Driver 97 to put Tucker away at 10:35.

Rating: B+. Match of the night here with Bate looking WAY better than a nineteen year old should. Tucker looked fine here as well and they had the best match so far, which isn't what I was expecting here. Cole thinks Bate is the favorite for the tournament but that might be a bit of a stretch, which is Cole's strong suit. At least this was entertaining though.

Here are the quarterfinal brackets:

Tyler Bate

Jordan Devlin

Trent Seven

Wolfgang

Mark Andrews

Joseph Conners

Pete Dunne

Sam Gradwell

Cole gives us a highlight package on the night.

Nigel and William Regal bring out the wrestlers who advanced to the second round. Dunne punches Gradwell in the face and gets yelled at to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. I liked this more than I was expecting to as I'm really not the target audience for something like this. The wrestling was mostly solid with nothing really bad and some names stood out above some others. It's not a great show but I have enough fun with it and that's all it needed to be. I'm looking forward to day two and I didn't expect to be so we'll call this a success.

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