

NXT – January 11, 2017: Asuka Cries

NXT

Date: January 11, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Percy Watson, Corey Graves, Tom Phillips

We're back to Full Sail and that means it's time to hit the gas on the road towards San Antonio. The NXT Title match is already set up but now it's time to set up the Tag Team Title match. We know that the Authors of Pain are waiting on the champions but the question is who will be defending against them. That's what we'll find out tonight as the Revival gets their rematch against DIY. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of DIY vs. Revival, as you probably expected.

Opening sequence.

Earlier today, Billie Kay and Peyton Royce attacked Asuka in the back. I'm sure their destruction will be quick and imminent.

Billie Kay/Peyton Royce vs. Sarah Bridges/Macy Evans

Peyton offers an early distraction so Billie can run Evans over from behind. The Aussies take turns beating on her until a hot tag brings Bridges in for the hope spot. That lasts all of about fifteen seconds as Bridges gets double teamed, setting up the bulldog onto Billie's knee for the pin at 2:06.

Post match the Aussies get the mic and are told that Asuka will kill them. Cue Asuka, who is beaten down again, only to have Nikki Cross come in for the save. With Kay and Royce taken out, Cross kicks Asuka in the face to leave the champ laying.

Sanity says they're taking over and it starts with Cross becoming the new Women's Champion. Big Damo watches from the shadows.

Elias Samson vs. Jonathan Cruz

Before the match, Samson sings about being around forever. With Graves ripping on Samson for general annoyances, Elias drives Cruz into the corner but gets rolled up for one. A clothesline drops Samson and that's about it for Cruz's offense as he gets his ribs bent around the post. Samson knees him in the ear (ow) and kicks him in the jaw, setting up the neckbreaker for the pin at 3:25.

Rating: D. Total squash here and Samson is starting to look better. The gimmick works very well but Samson is one of those guys who just doesn't click for some reason. He's got the look and the character but the in ring work really isn't all that great. Squashing people will keep him fresh in the audience's minds though and that's a good thing at the moment.

We take another look at DIY vs. Revival.

Andrade Cien Almas vs. Oney Lorcan

Almas now has pyro for his entrance. This is a rematch from Osaka where Lorcan won in an upset. Lorcan shoves him off a headlock but Almas just poses on the mat like the jerk that he is. A hard shot to the chest puts Andrade on the floor so Lorcan hits a Blockbuster off the apron. Back in and a clothesline cuts Oney off for the first time, setting up a slap to the face. Lorcan elbows him right back though and an Alabama Slam into the corner staggers Almas even more. Not that it matters as Almas does his pose on the ropes to buy himself some time, setting up the hammerlock DDT to put Lorcan away at 5:00.

Rating: C-. I still just don't get it with Almas. He's MUCH better as a heel than his disaster of a face run but that's not really saying much. Lorcan is an interesting case but his name and lack of much of a character hold him back. Their Osaka match was a lot better but that's probably due to them having five minutes this time as opposed to over double that in Japan.

Almas says this will be his year.

Another look at the Toronto match.

In a sitdown interview, Shinsuke Nakamura says he's proud of being

NXT Champion after a very hard series against Samoa Joe. That brings him to Bobby Roode, who he calls one of the best wrestlers in the world. Despite not being willing to appear on camera, Roode has a gift for Nakamura: Roode's ticket for last year's Takeover: Dallas, when Nakamura made his in ring debut.

Tag Team Titles: Revival vs. DIY

DIY is defending and the winners face the Authors of Pain in San Antonio. Gargano and Dawson get things going with Scott getting caught in an atomic drop. The champs come in and knock Dash and Dawson outside for an early break. Back with Gargano working on Dawson's arm as Graves plays cheerleader for the challengers.

Wilder makes one of those always great blind tags and the chop block puts Gargano down. That means it's time to pick apart a limb and the leg is wrapped around the post. Gargano gets tied in the Tree of Woe and they be clubberin on that knee. Johnny is sent outside and Revival is way too happy with a potential countout. Dash goes to get him but gets posted for his efforts, only to have Dawson tackle Gargano to break up a hot tag attempt.

Back from another break with the leg work continuing via a half crab. Ever the cocky heel, Dash slaps Johnny in the face and gets caught with an enziguri, allowing the hot tag to Ciampa. With a PSYCHO KILLER chant rolling, Ciampa cleans house with running knees and German suplexes. A hard knee to Dash's head gets two but Dawson just BLASTS Ciampa with a clothesline. Something like a Hart Attack is broken up with a superkick and Ciampa grabs the armbar.

Dawson gets smart by shoving Gargano onto them for the save in a great false finish. Gargano breaks out of an attempted leglock and suicide dives onto Dawson. Dash gets floored as well and it's back to Ciampa who walks into a DDT for another two. The champs unload with strikes and the running knee/superkick to both Dawson and Wilder (who were hugging) at the same time retain the titles at 21:02.

Rating: B+. Somehow that might be the worst match these four have ever had together. Some teams just have outstanding chemistry and

that's what these guys have. They just work so well together and that's something you either have or you don't. This was another brutal match and I'm curious to see what DIY can do with the Authors in San Antonio.

Speaking of the Authors, they run in and beat the champs down.

Regal makes DIY vs. the Authors for San Antonio. Wasn't that already announced? Also, next week it's Nakamura and Roode having a contract signing, which certainly was announced earlier in the night. Regal is almost done but Asuka comes in and demands to face Cross, Kay and Royce at Takeover to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. This was all about the main event and given how awesome that was, the rest of the show being this average wasn't going to bring it down. I'm curious about where they're going with that Roode ticket as that story needs to be more emotion based because not many people are going to buy Roode hanging in a slugout with Nakamura. Good show here, as expected.

Results

Billie Kay/Peyton Royce b. Sarah Bridges/Macy Evans – Bulldog onto a knee

Elias Samson b. Jonathan Cruz – Neckbreaker

Andrade Cien Almas b. Oney Lorcan – Hammerlock DDT

DIY b. Revival – Running knee/superkick

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

Best of 2016: Match of the Year

Now we're at one of the big ones. All the stories, all the hype and all the talk doesn't mean much if the match at the end is worthless. That's where we've arrived: what is the best match of the year? As uninteresting as WWE has seemed, it's actually been a stacked year for big time matches and there are several to pick from. As usual these are in no particular order and only WWE matches will be considered. Also note that if a match isn't included, it's either because I didn't think it was as good or, far more simply, I didn't see it.

1. AJ Styles vs. John Cena – Summerslam

Let's get one of the big ones out of the way early on. This is the definition of the Big Match John fight with Cena coming back to face Styles one more time, only to actually get pinned clean. That's something that might happen to Cena once a year (twice at most) and for him to put Styles over was a huge deal. This is the match that made Styles into a main event player and broke the idea of Cena losing the first match but winning the rematch.

Above all else though, this was about the action. These two beat the heck out of each other for over twenty three minutes and it felt like the big match it was supposed to be. This was two top level stars at the top of their game fighting at one of the biggest shows of the year. While that happens a lot, this felt like they lived up to the hype, which is what you have to expect from people at their level.

2. Kota Ibushi vs. TJ Perkins – Cruiserweight Classic Finale

This is a simple idea: take a pair of talented guys and let them fly around the ring for the better part of fifteen minutes because they're some of the most talented cruiserweights in the world. Ibushi was one of the favorites to win the tournament from the start but Perkins gave him a real challenge, eventually beating him to

advance to the finals and winning the tournament later in the night. Instead of wasting time with generic moves and almost no characters, we had two guys who are talented and doing all kinds of things to fire the crowd up. The crowd helped as well with the kind of people who wanted to see this style match and appreciate it far more than the average WWE fans. The lack of a story is fine because this was all about the action, which is the point of something like the Cruiserweight Classic.

3. Royal Rumble

Take thirty people, put them in a battle royal with timed intervals, the last man standing is the WWE World Champion. It's a very simple concept and something that even non-wrestling fans can easily understand. This was all about the World Title with defending champion Roman Reigns having to start the match because everything was rigged against him. This included the eventual winner Triple H coming in as a surprise entrant.

The match was all about the drama because there was always the chance that someone was going to be a surprise World Champion. The ending was a bit predictable but the mere chance was enough to make things more interesting. For once it wasn't about the title match down the road because it was all about the title then and there. It's a risky play but for once it actually worked, making up for the fact that it hadn't happened since 1992.

4. Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte – “Monday Night Raw” – July 25

This has easily been the greatest year for women's wrestling (at least on the main roster) and it would be criminal to not have at least one match from them on here. In this case, we'll go with the first post-Brand Split episode of “Monday Night Raw” when Charlotte FINALLY lost the title she had held (realistically) since October. Banks had been the most popular woman on the roster for a long time and the title change was long overdue, meaning the time was right on a major show like a landmark episode of “Monday Night Raw”.

The fact that it was the main event of the show is an afterthought at this point and that's what's the most amazing part. Trish Stratus vs. Lita in the main event of “Monday Night Raw” was legendary and now these two are main eventing multiple times a year. It's also one of the best women's matches of the year because these two have amazing chemistry and it was excellent television watching them

change the title here.

5. AJ Styles vs. Roman Reigns – Payback

Steve Austin called this one of the best WWE matches he's seen in years and that means it's at least worth a look. Styles won the title shot on the "Monday Night Raw" after "Wrestlemania XXXII" and wound up giving Reigns a run for his money. Sure it took the help of Luke Gallows and Karl Anderson but you don't need a newcomer giving the new champ a real test on his own just yet.

What followed was an outstanding power vs. speed match with Styles giving him everything he had and getting some insane near falls. Reigns eventually won with a spear and then won the rematch in the same fashion, but these matches made Styles feel like a major player. He was facing Cena soon after and then winning the Smackdown World Title. Sometimes it's all about that first match though and this one was a blast throughout.

6. DIY vs. Revival – Takeover: Toronto

Now we've got one of the frontrunners. If there's one thing NXT knows how to do, it's set up things from the beginning and move forward until you NEED to see the big ending finally take place. That's what we had here with DIY getting closer and closer to winning the NXT Tag Team Titles. It was finally set up for the big time NXT gimmick match: two out of three falls. That meant you could see extra wrestling and my goodness did they blow the roof off the place.

The match itself was some of the best wrestling NXT has ever put together with some of the hottest near falls I've ever seen. The ending was even better with DIY hooking a double submission to make Revival tap out at the exact same time because there was just nothing left for them to do. It's much more about putting everything together to tell a complete story with the challengers getting closer and closer until they FINALLY captured the titles because they were the better team. That's how wrestling is supposed to work and it was in one of the best matches of the year.

7. Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens – Battleground

If you have a feud between two very talented wrestlers, at some point one of them actually needs to win their share of the matches every now and then. That's been the problem for Zayn over the years

as he very rarely actually beats Owens. It had to happen at some point though and that's what happened here. After all those major losses (and one win on a nothing "Monday Night Raw"), Zayn FINALLY got to beat Owens on the big stage at "Battleground 2016".

Much like the DIY vs. Revival match, this was all about the story. The idea was that Owens was just flat out better than Zayn, who kept getting close but could never close the deal. That's what "Battleground 2016" was all about and the fact that it was billed as the final match between the two of them (of course it wasn't) made it feel like a huge moment. Zayn needed the win, so of course WWE then did a total of nothing with him after that and made Owens the Raw World Champion. But still, Zayn winning was a great moment and the natural chemistry between the two of them made it even better.

8. Team Smackdown Live vs. Team Monday Night Raw – Survivor Series

It was billed as the other main event of the show (along side FANTASY WARFARE) and my goodness did it manage to work well. This match lasted almost an hour, making it even longer than some Royal Rumbles. The eliminations took their time and the match was allowed to build up instead of being rushed along until we get to the big ones at the end, making it feel like an event instead of just a regular match.

The fact that it was the Wyatts being the sole survivors instead of Reigns and Seth Rollins made it even more important. For once, Bray Wyatt got a big win and looked like a star, which hopefully means something going forward. Unfortunately the match is almost entirely forgotten after the big main event became all anyone remembers from the show. That being said, we had a great match beforehand and it's worth looking at again.

9. Miz vs. Dolph Ziggler – No Mercy

Unlike several previous moments, this was all about drama instead of the action. While the wrestling was good, the idea that it was someone's career vs. a title made it seem important. Ziggler was on a downward spiral at this point and Miz looked better and better every week so the idea that Ziggler could win seemed like a long shot. It was such a long shot that the official preview for the following episode of "Smackdown Live" talked about Ziggler's exit from the company.

Ziggler of course won, but the fact that it was billed up as a match

that he HAD to win was the key to the whole thing. Miz can talk his way into anything and he had us believing that Ziggler's whole life revolved around this one match. It told a great story and set up the match as something that feels like it matters for a change instead of "eh we can just do the same thing next week." Sure Ziggler dropped the title back a few weeks later but he won here, which is what mattered more than anything else.

10. Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Sami Zayn – Takeover: Dallas

Until DIY vs. Revival, this was the undisputed clubhouse leader for Match of the Year and it's still one of the most amazing things I've seen. I was lucky enough to be in the crowd for this show and I bought all the way into everything that happened throughout. This was all about beating the absolute heck out of each other with the winner being the one to survive. It was also Zayn's grand finale in NXT, which wasn't the biggest surprise when you consider he was in the Intercontinental Title match the next night.

This isn't a match that needs a lot of talking about because it was all about beating the heck out of each other and little more. Nakamura was the new kid on the block and Zayn was on his way to bigger and better things but we were lucky enough to get to see one of the hardest hitting brawls I've ever seen for the transition between eras. Absolutely incredible stuff and something truly special.

11. Cesaro vs. The Miz vs. Kevin Owens vs. Sami Zayn – Extreme Rules

We'll wrap it up with a forgotten classic as Miz defends the Intercontinental Title against three guys who probably should have been able to rip his head off without blinking an eye. What followed was a nearly twenty minute long match with all four more than working hard and getting in near fall after near fall. As you might expect, Miz wound up stealing the pin after someone else did the work and that's exactly what should have happened.

This was all about the action and the question of who was going to wind up with the title in the end. In other words, it made me wonder what might happen and I wanted to see what they were going to do at the end of the match. You don't see that happen in matches like these very often and it made the Intercontinental Title feel important for the first time in far too long.

12. The Final Deletion – Impact Wrestling – June 28

While there were better matches throughout the year, I don't think any of them came close to this one's level of creativity and shock value. I know there were other, bigger versions of the same formula but the first one worked better than the rest. By the time we got to Tag Team Apocalypto or the Great War, a lot of this stuff had lost its steam. The first time we saw it though, it was some of the most creative stuff ever done on a wrestling show.

The Hardys really have put together something amazing and it worked so well as a total change of pace. It might not have had much to do with wrestling but there was a ring and a three count so I guess we can classify it as a match. This is more of a glorified honorable mention but it wouldn't be fair to leave it out.

That brings us to the winner and I don't like doing something like this but I have to give it a tie. I have to go with a combination of Zayn vs. Nakamura and DIY vs. Revival. No matter how many times I think about these two matches, I just can't find a way to pick between the two of them. DIY vs. Revival was a long term story but Nakamura vs. Zayn was the short term story that began and ended at the bells. Either of those can work to perfection and these two tied for Match of the Year.

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NXT – January 4, 2017: With a Lot of Hitting Him in the Face

NXT

Date: January 4, 2017

Location: Margaret Court Arena, Melbourne, Australia

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

We're back with another special show as it's another two hour house show, this time from Australia. Again we've seen most of the main event but just like last week, we should get to see more than we already got a few weeks back. Other than that, almost none of this matters aside from having good matches. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Revival vs. Tino Sabbatelli/Riddick Moss

Dawson and Moss start things off as the fans are rather into this early on. That goes nowhere so it's off to Tino vs. Wilder as the slow pace continues. Tino slams Dash so Moss can get two off an elbow drop. Moss fights off Revival as Tino just stands there and lets the double teaming ensue.

Riddick can't fight them off forever though and the top guys (Graves: "THEY'RE STILL TOP GUYS!") take over as you might expect. An elbow finally misses and the diving tag brings in Tino for the house cleaning. Wilder pulls Sabbatelli to the floor though and Moss grabs a rollup for two. Back in and the Shatter Machine puts Moss away at 11:00.

Rating: C. This was a long squash, which makes for some uninteresting matches on house shows. Revival were almost the faces here, which made for a really awkward match. It's certainly not bad or anything but this is such a strange style for NXT, which is so based on building up to matches instead of one offs like this one.

Elias Samson/Bobby Roode vs. Tye Dillinger/Buddy Murphy

Samson gets annoyed at the fans cutting off his singing until Roode cuts him off again for a much more popular entrance. Murphy is the

home country boy here with Graves saying it's so Murphy can know someone likes him. Roode starts with Murphy but lets Elias know he's got an eye on the other Canadian.

We hit the posing early on with Graves suggesting that Phillips and Murphy go box kangaroos together. A kick to the face gives Murphy two as the fans chant TEN. It's off to Dillinger but Roode bails before any contact is made. With the DRIFT AWAY chants rolling, Samson works on the arm and gets the ten treatment. A slingshot splash gets two and, according to Phillips, kangaroos can't hop backwards.

Roode is dragged in but Tye beats both of them up anyway, only to be taken down by a knee to the back. The fans still don't like Samson and call him some very rude names before switching to a GLORIOUS chant. For some reason Roode won't rain down right hands in the corner so it's an a superkick to set up the double tag. Murphy comes in and cleans house, including a bad looking hurricanrana to Roode. A better looking flip dive takes him out, leaving Dillinger to hit the Tyebreaker to put Samson away at 11:19.

Rating: C+. This was a bit more my style with a standard tag formula and wrestlers that the fans were actually interested in. Also, as expected, NXT isn't about to give us Dillinger and Roode being involved in a fall, as they shouldn't here. That's still a big enough feud for one more TV match so why waste it here?

Liv Morgan vs. Billie Kay vs. Ember Moon

As expected, Kay is the big crowd favorite but bails to the floor so the other two can slug it out. Well as much slugging as Morgan is going to do. Billie tries to steal a pin but gets caught in that rolling sunset flip to give Morgan some near falls. A double bulldog puts Kay and Moon down so Liv covers one but gets kicked out onto the other over and over in a clever spot.

Back up and Billie hits Eat Defeat for two on Moon, followed by an armbar into a suplex. The fans want to know if Billie will be their girl (she's no Bayley) but settle for Liv getting superkicked off the apron. Moon kicks Billie in the face again and all three are knocked out to the floor. Back in and Kay gets double kicked but Liv breaks up the Eclipse. Instead, Billie powerbombs Liv off the top and walks into the Eclipse to give Moon the pin at 8:28.

Rating: C+. Another totally fine match here as Moon gets to look

strong again. I could easily see Moon getting her shot at the title over Wrestlemania weekend though I'm not sure if that's a big enough title match for Asuka. You know, assuming Nikki Cross doesn't take the title from her in San Antonio.

Tag Team Titles: DIY vs. TM61

TM61 is challenging and it's Ciampa and Thorn trading near falls to start. That earns a quick handshake and the fans are VERY pleased so far. Miller and Gargano come in and it's one heck of a right hand to send Johnny into the corner. A very delayed vertical suplex gets two on Gargano so it's back to Ciampa for some arm cranking. Thorn gets two off a falcon's arrow and we take a break.

Back with Ciampa breaking up a handspring elbow and bringing Gargano back in. Johnny grabs a sunset flip but leans forward and pulls on Thorn's neck for a weird looking submission hold. That goes nowhere so Thorn dropkicks Ciampa so it can be back to Miller for the house cleaning. Johnny's spear through the ropes cuts him off for another near fall. A tornado DDT/enziguri combo gives Gargano two more but Thorn powerbombs his own partner to set up a Tower of Doom on Ciampa.

Clever spot and Gargano shoving Miller into the pin for the save made it better. Project Ciampa gives us another near fall and the fans are WAY into the Aussies. Miller and Gargano slug it out in the middle of the ring with Johnny getting the better of it. Thorn is knocked to the floor and the running knee/superkick combo retains the titles at 18:18.

Rating: B. DIY really can do no wrong at this point and that's always going to be entertaining. I'm still worried about the match against the Authors of Pain but at least we had one heck of a pair of matches on these international tours. TM61 is still good but they're several steps behind the champs and Revival, which kind of leaves them out in the cold.

We get the big post match show of respect.

Recap of Nakamura vs. Joe.

NXT Title: Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Samoa Joe

Nakamura is defending and this is inside a cage. The champ takes him down by the leg to start but they grapple up against the ropes with neither being able to get much of an advantage. Joe gets taken into

the corner for Good Vibrations so he sends Nakamura hard into the cage to even things up.

The corner enziguri gets two and we take an early break. Back with Joe kicking him in the face again and dropping an elbow for two. A weak LET'S GO CENA/CENA SUCKS chant is quickly booed down as Joe slowly beats on the champ. We hit the neck crank for a bit before Nakamura fights back up with the running kick to the face. Joe gets in his own kick but misses the backsplash to put both guys down for a bit.

It's Joe up first with his rotating submissions but Nakamura slips out of the Crossface. Instead Joe sends him into the cage a few more times and we take a second break. Back with Nakamura hitting more knees to the head and lifting Joe for a big German suplex. Kinshasa is countered with a powerslam and the Koquina Clutch doesn't last long. Nakamura knees him in the head again for two and BLASTS Joe with a top rope Kinshasa. Back to back regular versions retain the title at 26:15.

Rating: B+. Again, the clipped version of this from a few weeks ago is almost unfair as it only showed about thirteen minutes instead of over twice that long. This was a good way to definitively put Nakamura over Joe for good and let both guys move on to something else. It really wouldn't surprise me if that means the main roster for Joe so at least he went out on a high note.

Replays wrap it up.

Overall Rating: B-. I actually had a bit more fun watching this one than last week's as the matches felt a little more important, possibly due to a full time team challenging DIY instead of a makeshift pairing. It's still a good show but I'm really looking forward to getting back to the regular show instead of these specials where there's no storyline development. The wrestling has been fine but I need a bit more than that.

Results

Revival b. Tino Sabbatelli/Riddick Moss – Shatter Machine to Moss

Tye Dillinger/Buddy Murphy b. Bobby Roode/Elias Samson – Tyebreaker to Samson

Ember Moon b. Billie Kay and Liv Morgan – Eclipse to Kay

DIY b. TM61 – Running knee/superkick combination to Miller

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Samoa Joe – Kinshasa

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NXT – December 7, 2016: Around the World

NXT

Date: December 7, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves, Percy Watson

This is another interesting show as it's a combination of the regular taping and the NXT Title match from Osaka, Japan with Shinsuke Nakamura challenging Samoa Joe for the title. It's also nearly time to start getting ready for Takeover: San Antonio, which is only about six weeks away. Let's get to it.

We open with a quick video hyping up the title match.

Opening sequence.

Here's DIY to get things going with the new champs coming in through the crowd to celebrate. It takes some time for the cheering to die down but Paul Ellering and the Authors of Pain cut them off before anything can be said. Ellering talks about how awesome they are

until the Revival cuts them out with the fans singing their song. Revival gets to ringside and says the Authors only won because Revival was out of the tournament. The Authors come down to shove Revival around with Ellering saying they're coming for the titles. I'm thinking a rematch is in order to set up the Authors' opponent and that's just good.

We're getting a new commentators and it's....Percy Watson? Yes that Percy Watson. As in the guy you haven't thought of since he was released. I have no idea why he's here or what need he's filling but he's certainly here.

No Way Jose/Rich Swann vs. Sanity

Sanity confirms their heel status by cutting the pre-match dance off. It's Alexander Wolfe and Eric Young for the team here. There's no Sawyer Fulton here and Eric stomps on Fulton's jacket in some symbolism. Swann and Jose go fast to start by knocking Wolfe out to the floor.

Unfortunately the announcers have to go out of their way to get Watson in on commentary and it doesn't feel very natural. Swann gets taken into the Sanity corner and it's time for an early break. Back with Swann taking a Bret Hart chest bump in the corner and getting caught in a dragon sleeper from the middle rope. That's not bad.

Wolfe comes in for his version of dancing and a neck crank to keep things slow. A double clothesline gives Swann a breather and of course equals out several minutes of offense. Jose comes in off the hot tag and gives Young a TKO for two. A big corkscrew dive sends Swann into Wolfe but here's a huge man to send Jose into the steps. The announcers acknowledge him as Damo (formerly Big Damo) as he stares Wolfe down. Back inside, Young's wheelbarrow into a neckbreaker ends Jose at 10:35.

Rating: C. The match was nothing special but Damo debut as a potential new member of the team makes a lot of sense. He looks like a monster (please have him put on a singlet or a shirt) and would fit in really well with the group. Not a good match or anything but I'm digging Sanity more every week.

Sanity looks at Damo, who leaves on his own.

William Regal makes Revival vs. DIY for the titles on January 11 (that's a long way off for NXT). Tye Dillinger comes in to suggest he should leave NXT after losing to Samoa Joe. Regal cuts him off and offers him a spot in a tournament to crown a new #1 contender. There will be four singles matches with the winners facing off in a four way match for the title shot in San Antonio.

Eric Young has nothing to say about Damo but Nikki Cross runs into Asuka and stares at the title. Asuka gives her the evil smile. I could go for this.

Ember Moon vs. Kimber Lee

Lee is a former Chikara Grand Champion. Moon wastes no time in starting in with the kicks but charges into a side suplex for two. A hurricanrana gets Ember out of trouble and the Eclipse ends Lee at 3:03.

Rating: D+. I still can't get over how awesome the Eclipse looks. The timing she has to have to pull off a move like that is just amazing and I've never seen her come close to missing. Lee got in some offense here and I wouldn't mind seeing her signed up to appear more in NXT.

Here are the matches for the #1 contenders tournament:

Tye Dillinger

Eric Young

Elias Samson

Roderick Strong

Oney Lorcan

Bobby Roode

Andrade Cien Almas

No Way Jose

NXT Title: Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Samoa Joe

Joe is defending and is quickly kicked into the corner for Good

Vibrations. A poke to the eye gets the champ out of trouble and we take a break. Back with Nakamura in an STF which is turned into a Crossface which is turned into a rope grab. A German suplex looks to set up Kinshasa but Joe snaps off a powerslam for two instead.

Nakamura gets out of the Muscle Buster, only to get caught in the Koquina Clutch. It's the standing version though (I believe we call that a sleeper) and Joe releases for a string of suplexes instead. Joe kicks him out to the floor and loads up the Rock Bottom onto the steps. That earns him a bunch of strikes to the back and neck as Nakamura takes over for a change. Back in and Nakamura can't keep him up in a fireman's carry. Instead he goes to the middle rope so the middle rope knee to the head can set up Kinshasa for the pin and the title at 10:45 shown.

Rating: B. This was the usual good, hard hitting brawl from these two though I'm pretty sure it's going to be the last big match, unless we see the Australia cage match. There's not much left for Joe in NXT at this point so odds are he's either in the Rumble or debuts before then. Good match of course and it's cool that we got to see it.

We'll actually see the cage match next week on NXT.

Overall Rating: B-. This was fine for a special show and next week feels like it's going to be the same thing. It's kind of weird that this didn't feel like anything all that interesting but, as usual, NXT got a lot done here. We had two debuts (I'm still wondering why Watson is here), a title match set up, another title match after that set up, a title feud teased and a title change.

Results

Sanity b. No Way Jose/Rich Swann – Wheelbarrow neckbreaker to Jose

Ember Moon b. Kimber Lee – Eclipse

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Samoa Joe – Kinshasa

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NXT Takeover: Toronto: Who Knew Canada Could Get This Hot?

Takeover: Toronto

Date: November 19, 2016

Location: Air Canada Centre, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Commentators: Corey Graves, Tom Phillips

We're up north this time as NXT gets another showcase event on the weekend of a major WWE pay per view. There are a few rematches tonight but we're also getting the finals of the second annual Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic as well as the return of WWE legend Mickie James, who is challenging the unstoppable Asuka for the NXT Women's Title. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks at various wrestlers from Toronto, which seems to translate into any wrestler ever from Canada, including the Harts. Tonight it's NXT's turn to show what they can do, which turns into your regular opening video.

The huge crowd looks great as always.

Tye Dillinger vs. Bobby Roode

Roode comes out with a freaking choir singing his theme song.

Everybody else can go home because he just won Takeover. Dillinger

comes out to a much simpler entrance but the pop is outstanding with the fans going nuts and chanting TEN. We get a BOTH THESE GUYS chant as they do the big staredown. It really is amazing how effective a story as simple as a broken team can be when you have a crowd like this to carry them.

They slug it out to start with Dillinger clotheslining him out to the floor twice in a row as the dueling chants begin. Back in and Roode begs off, only to have Dillinger stomp on his fingers. Some right hands in the corner (guess how many) have the fans even more fired up. Roode sends him outside and slowly takes over with some elbows to the neck but the crowd is still right there with the TENS. A knee drop gets two for Roode as the fans want the apron fixed. Tye comes back with chops and other assorted strikes but the threat of a Tyebreaker is countered into a spinebuster for two. Roode gets two more off a superplex (or Gloriousplex according to Graves) and MOCKS THE TEN.

A rollup with feet on the ropes gets two and a superkick gets the same for Dillinger. Bobby might have lost a tooth and it's only getting worse as they slug it out. The inverted DDT is countered into a Sharpshooter but Roode is quickly in the ropes. Back up and Tye is sent shoulder first into the post, setting up the inverted DDT for the pin at 16:32.

Rating: B. Well that worked. These two beat the heck out of each other but the story was in the crowd, who is white hot for this show. I wasn't expecting much out of this one but I was buying the possibility of Dillinger winning more than once, which I really never would have thought possible. Tye is going to get a big rub here despite the loss and that's what matters. I'm sure Roode will be near the title scene soon enough, as he should be.

Tye gets the big hero's ovation after the match.

Long recap of the Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic.

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

The Authors' manager Paul Ellering is suspended above the ring in a

small cage. Akum and Miller get things going but things quickly break down with all four heading outside. For reasons of general insanity, Thorn climbs the structure holding up the cage for a big flip dive to take out both Authors.

Thorn gets flipped upside down and lands head first on the apron and we hit the chinlock. That goes nowhere so the hot tag brings in Miller as everything breaks down. Thunder Valley actually gets two on Akum but Razar makes the save. Another flip dive takes the Authors down again but Ellering drops a chain down into the ring. Thorn gets two off a rollup but a quick Last Chapter gives the Authors the tournament at 8:21.

Rating: C+. The flips helped a lot and TM61 gave it more of a go than I was expecting but this was a bit of a mess. The Authors winning was the only logical call and they did a great job of making TM61 feel like bigger deals, though it's still not quite enough. This should make the Authors the #1 contenders and that could lead to an amazing match against DIY, assuming they get the belts here. HHH, Goldust and William Regal come out to congratulate the winners. Long recap of DIY vs. Revival, with the challengers coming so close to getting the titles time after time. Tonight they have three chances in a 2/3 falls match.

Tag Team Titles: DIY vs. Revival

Dash Wilder and Scott Dawson are defending. Gargano and Dawson get things going and hit the mat running (or rather rolling) with an early rollup getting two on Scott. A blind tag brings in Ciampa to face Dash as the champs slowly take over. The way too early hot tag brings in Gargano as house is cleaned. The slingshot spear through the ropes doesn't work though and it's a Shatter Machine to put the champs up 1-0 at 5:10.

Johnny is in trouble as the second fall begins, including Dawson grabbing a suplex for two. We hit a bodyscissors with a chinlock for a bit before Johnny grabs a tornado DDT on Wilder and enziguris Dawson at the same time. That's enough for the hot tag off to Ciampa

and the champs are suddenly in trouble. Three straight German suplexes and a running knee to the head get two on Dawson. The superkick/running knee combo is enough to tie things up at 14:22.

The third fall begins with Ciampa putting on his flip over armbars but Dawson counters into a crucifix for two. A hanging Downward Spiral and a slingshot DDT get a close two on Dawson, whose eyes are all over the place. Gargano has to fight out of the corner with forearms all around before making the crowd completely buy into a small package.

Dawson tries to bring in the title but winds up using it as a shield to block a kick to the head. We hit that reverse Figure Four and the crowd is losing it until Gargano does the big dive to get to the ropes. The champs get cute and try DIY's double strike finisher but Dawson goes too high and superkicks his partner. A Shatter Machine gets two on Dawson and the reaction to the near fall is insane.

Dawson grabs a rollup with trunks but the referee won't count it because he's not legal. Wilder goes after Gargano's good leg but a pinfall reversal sequence breaks up the leg lock attempt. Johnny puts on the modified Crossface and Ciampa adds his flip armbars. The Revival grab hands to block the tap before they tap out at the same time to give DIY the titles at 22:16.

Rating: A+. I had this at an A and then got to thinking that there's really nothing holding it back. If there's anything in wrestling more exciting than NXT tag teams doing hot tags and saves on near falls, I'm not sure what it is. DIY winning makes sense here and they have a built in feud with the Authors ready to go. Outstanding stuff here and one as this tag division just does not stop.

Jim Ross is here.

Recap of Mickie James vs. Asuka, which is basically Asuka needing competition and no one in NXT being ready to give her a real challenge.

Women's Title: Asuka vs. Mickie James

Mickie is challenging and still looks great. The first three rows

all have Asuka masks for an even creepier entrance than usual. After the Big Match Intros, we're ready to go with a feeling out process and a very intense handshake. Mickie cartwheels out of a wristlock and scores with a basement dropkick to send Asuka outside for a rare show of weakness.

Back in and Mickie fires off a kick, only to get knocked to the floor with the hip attack. Asuka lets Mickie get back in but decks her with another hip attack to really take over. The Mick Kick is blocked and a release German suplex on the floor has Mickie looking mostly dead. Back in and another hip attack sets up some YES Kicks with Mickie asking for more.

A big one is countered into a Muta Lock of all things until Asuka gets a rope. Back up and they both do the crazy eyes until Mickie snaps off a neckbreaker and a flapjack (always like that move). A cross between a top rope seated senton and Thesz press gets two on the champ and Mickie kicks her down again. Now the Mick Kick connects but Asuka gets a foot on the ropes. The MickieDT is countered into the Asuka Lock with James flipping all over the place (ignore her feet touching the ropes at one point) before tapping out at 13:11.

Rating: B. This was a lot more competitive than I was expecting with Mickie more than holding her own against the monster champion. They did a great job of treating Mickie like a real threat and someone who could actually give Asuka a run for her money instead of someone just there because she used to be a name. Well booked and fought match here with the only possible outcome.

Mickie offers a handshake but Asuka just holds up the title.

Pat Patterson is here.

We recap Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Samoa Joe in a rematch from their showdown at Brooklyn where Joe lost the title. This time is set up to be more violent though with Joe injuring Nakamura to help set this up.

NXT Title: Samoa Joe vs. Shinsuke Nakamura

Nakamura is defending and walks through a tunnel of violinists playing his theme song. They even serenade him as he's doing his entrance on the mat. The strikes start at the bell and Joe takes over with a kick to the thigh. Nakamura does his head on the chest taunt and says bring it on, followed by Good Vibrations in the corner.

They head outside with a running boot to the face putting Joe in the crowd for a rare visual around here. Back in and Joe scores with a hard kick, which Graves says is why people call him Joey Head Rocker. I've never, ever heard anyone call him that Corey. Like, never. Nakamura comes back with the hard knees to the head but Joe strikes him back just as hard.

The champ misses a strike though and is sent outside for a big suicide elbow. Back in and Nakamura puts him on the top for the running knee to the ribs. Joe's big boot and backsplash get two, followed by the powerbomb into the submission sequence. Ropes are grabbed and Nakamura gets up with a middle rope Kinshasa for no cover.

Instead Nakamura muscles him over into a German suplex. Kinshasa hits buckle though and Joe takes it out again. It's too early for the MuscleBuster though and the regular Kinshasa gets two. A second attempt is countered into the Koquina Clutch but Joe has to settle for rolling suplexes (German, dragon, straitjacket) and the kickout has him in awe.

Joe, with blood on his eye, takes another Kinshasa to the back of the head to put him outside. With the referee shoved aside, Joe gets in a low blow and hits the Rock Bottom onto the steps. Back in and the MuscleBuster makes Joe the first ever two time NXT Champion at 20:11.

Rating: A. I'm genuinely shocked by that ending. I mean, they're clearly setting up a trilogy fight (likely in San Antonio) but I can't believe they actually switched the title back. It's not a bad thing or a crazy decision but quite surprising. This was another great brawl though with both guys beating the heck out of each other

for twenty minutes. What else could you really ask for? I mean, save for a gimmick rematch where they can get even more violent.

Joe walks off with the title to end the show.

Overall Rating: A. The short tournament match holds this back a bit but the two male title matches more than carry it to greatness. Couple that with the crowd being on fire all night and there was no way this wasn't going to feel huge. That Tag Team Title match is a must see though as the tag division has replaced the women's division as the best thing about NXT. You can skip the Dusty Classic and probably the women's match but check out the other three.

Results

Bobby Roode b. Tye Dillinger – Inverted DDT

Authors of Pain b. TM61 – Last Chapter to Miller

DIY b. Revival – Double submissions

Asuka b. Mickie James – Asuka Lock

Samoa Joe b. Shinsuke Nakamura – MuscleBuster

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Takeover: Toronto Preview

For the first time ever, it's an NXT Takeover in the Great White

North and, in another first, it's an NXT Takeover on Survivor Series weekend. As is usually the case, this isn't feeling like a huge show on paper but there's a good chance that NXT is going to surprise us again because that's what they do. These shows are almost always a case of a big pile of good adding up to a solid show. Either way, it's almost a guaranteed good show at worst so let's get to it.

We don't really have the deepest card here so we'll start with the only match with nothing on the line as Bobby Roode and Tye Dillinger battle it out to be king of Toronto. This is an interesting one as Roode is the huge smark favorite due to the power of that entrance but Dillinger is on a roll at the moment with the TEN gimmick. The winner here is nowhere near as interesting as the crowd reactions.

The main reason the winner isn't interesting is because it's not in doubt. Roode looks destined to be the next challenger for the NXT Title and he's not going to be doing that if he loses here. Dillinger is in a bit over his head here and while he's getting better, he's not about to beat Roode here. I'm sure Dillinger will get in some offense and the match will be entertaining so Dillinger saves some face but there's no way Roode is going down here, not with the roll he's on at the moment.

We'll move on to a title match now as NXT Women's Champion Asuka defends against Mickie James, who is making her first WWE appearance in years. This might not be the most interesting match on paper but the problem is how weak the women's division has been left after all the callups over the last few months. The division is getting better and there's hope for the future but they're just not ready yet.

Much like the first match, I don't think there's much drama about who is going to win. James might not even be around after this match so keeping the title on Asuka is the only possible option. She's getting close to setting the record for longest reign as champion (which she'll break in early February) and I really can't imagine anyone beating her straight up right now. That being said, they've built her up as such a monster that the first person to actually pin her is going to be set for a long time. But yeah, Asuka retains here

after a strong match.

Now we'll move on to the other non-title match but it's for a bit trophy. In this case it's the finals of the second annual Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic, which turned out to be a big deal last year. This time though we have two normal tag teams instead of guys being thrown together for the sake of a singles angle. That means TM61 vs. the Authors of Pain and I'm a lot more confused about who goes over here.

I really don't get the appeal of TM61. They're starting to grow on me but they're really missing that fire that sets them apart from everyone else. Granted it's not helping that they're the next team in line after American Alpha, DIY and the Revival and they had a huge international reputation as they came in. Unfortunately they haven't quite lived up to it, though they're far from bad. That leaves them just kind of there but maybe this can be their big pickup.

On the other hand you have the Authors of Pain, who are just old school monsters. They run over everyone in front of them and only DIY gave them a run for their money. Manager Paul Ellering will be in a cage above the ring to keep things even but I'm not sure that's enough to keep them away from the trophy.

I'm going with the Authors here but I'm really not sure on it. Either team could win here but it basically comes down to who you see getting the next title shot. Either team could face either champions but I just can't imagine giving the Authors their first loss just yet. They seem to be the team that dominates the titles until someone breaks through to take them down and that's a long term feud instead of a one off loss. So yeah, the Authors take the tournament in a good match.

Speaking of the Tag Team Titles, let's look at what should be a classic between DIY and the defending Revival in a 2/3 falls match. These teams have traded wins for months now and this should be the big blowoff. Their previous match got rave reviews and I see no reason this one shouldn't be just as good if not even better.

I'll go with the champs finally dropping the titles here as Revival has held them for a long time now and, assuming I'm right about the tournament final, there's no one left for them to fight. This is likely going to be the treat of the show though and I can't imagine it doesn't go three falls. NXT knows how to do those white hot near falls as well as anyone has ever done and that's what we're going to get here, along with new champions.

That leaves us with what should be one of the most violent brawls NXT has ever seen as NXT Champion Shinsuke Nakamura defends against Samoa Joe. These two had a huge match back in Brooklyn, which wasn't quite the wild brawl that everyone was expecting. However, that's the story they've been setting up here and these two are more than capable of pulling it off.

As great a fighter as Joe is, it's WAY too early to take the title off of Nakamura just yet. He'll need about three Kinshasas but it's going to be enough to take Joe down. This is going to be in the vein of Nakamura vs. Sami Zayn from earlier in the year where both guys were barely able to stand but that's exactly where Nakamura shines. It's going to be a blast and that's what this show needs.

There's also the possibility of a six woman tag being added with Billie Kay/Peyton Royce/??? vs. Liv Morgan/Aliyah/Ember Moon, though I'd bet on that taking place on NXT next week. As for a partner, I'd guess the Aussies bring in some lower level name like Daria Berenato, who can get a nice rub on a big show as a result. Either way, I'll take Morgan's team as either she or Moon will be the big challenger to Asuka going forward.

The thing to remember about Takeover is that while a lot of the matches aren't in question, the fun part is in the journey. It's going to be a lot of fun to see most of these matches, which have potential to be something special. The main event and Tag Team Title matches in particular should blow the roof off the place (assume it's fixed in between) and that's going to make for one heck of a kickoff to this huge weekend.

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NXT Results – November 9, 2016: Just Like Last Time

NXT

Date: November 9, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

We're about a week and a half away from Takeover: Toronto and that means we're in the final drive to the big show. There's a good chance we're going to see the semifinals of the Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic tonight but on top of that we'll be seeing the contract signing for the NXT Title match between Shinsuke Nakamura and Samoa Joe. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

We go to the Performance Center to preview the two tournament matches tonight.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic: DIY vs. Authors of Pain

From Los Angeles. Ciampa and Akum start things off with Tommaso being thrown all over the place. Gargano comes in and gets the same treatment as everything breaks down. DIY cleans house with strikes

to the face and a double clothesline as the Authors are knocked outside. A suicide dive doesn't work for Gargano so Ciampa tries one of his own, only to have the Authors throw Johnny at Tommaso for a big crash as we take a break.

Back with Gargano in more trouble as Akum sends him head first into the buckle, leaving Johnny looking like he's on another planet. An over the shoulder backbreaker makes things worse until Gargano grabs a DDT. The hot tag brings in Ciampa to clean house a bit and a German suplex sends Razar flying.

Razar is right back in though and gives Ciampa a Samoan drop while hitting a fall away slam on Gargano at the same time. Those are two full size men being thrown at the same time. THAT'S NOT NORMAL. DIY gets in their double strike but Ellering offers the distraction. It's quite the distraction too as the Revival is able to sneak out from underneath the ring to lay out Gargano, leaving Ciampa to take the Last Chapter for the pin at 13:25.

Rating: B-. NXT never lets me down. I was worried that they were going to have one of these teams lose clean but since this is a promotion that makes sense, there was Revival to keep things from getting too over the top. The match was entertaining as well and it's going to be DIY vs. Revival somewhere down the line, which is all they need to do.

Tye Dillinger is ticked off and wants to take out Bobby Roode in Dusty's memory.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic Semifinals: TM61 vs. Sanity

From Los Angeles again. Sanity jumps Thorn and Miller from behind to start and we take a break with TM61 in trouble before the opening bell. Back with Miller nowhere in sight as Thorn takes a beating from both monsters. Alexander does some weird dance before rubbing his forearm in Thorn's face. Miller finally gets on the apron, only to be knocked right back to the floor. An errant uppercut takes out Wolfe though and the hot tag brings Miller in to clean house.

Everything breaks down and Eric Young goes after Miller, only to have Thorn hit a quick dropkick into a rollup on Wolfe to advance at

6:42.

Rating: C. TM61 still has some work to do but I'm starting to get into them as a team. The problem is they're having to compete with the Revival and DIY, who have turned this into an art form and are replacing American Alpha, who might have been even better. You could have penciled TM61 in as soon as the Authors won and there's nothing wrong with that.

William Regal makes DIY vs. Revival for the Tag Team Titles in a 2/3 falls match at Takeover. I love that one of NXT's biggest gimmick matches is to have more wrestling instead of some weapon or contraption.

Roode will prove that Dillinger is a perfect loser.

Ember Moon vs. Rachel Evers

That would be the former Rachel Ellering and I'm sure it's no coincidence that she was trained by Lance Storm (real name Lance Evers). Ember offers a freaky smile to start and gets two off a rollup. Something like a nip up into a hurricanrana puts Evers down again, only to have her duck a springboard crossbody. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Ember pops up and clotheslines the heck out of Rachel. The Eclipse wraps Evers up at 3:13.

Rating: D+. Just a step above a squash here as Ember is definitely being groomed as the next challenger for Asuka, which is the best option NXT has. She's just weird enough to throw Asuka off her game and that Eclipse is one of the best looking finishers I've seen in a long time. Good performance here, as is almost always the case for Moon.

Regal brings out Shinsuke Nakamura and Samoa Joe for the contract signing. The ring is full of security but Joe goes back to the entrance and sets up his own table and chair on the stage. Joe doesn't think Regal is concerned with his safety so business will be conducted from up here.

Nakamura is some kind of rabid animal but Joe is the kind of man that can come to that ring and have him stretched out at any time.

Joe orders Regal to bring him the contract and the boss actually does so, allowing Joe to sign. The disgusted Regal brings the contract back to Nakamura, who beats up the security. One of the guards is powerbombed through the table and the contract is signed to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. I'm getting a bit tired of the tournament as we've done almost nothing but work on it for the last two weeks. NXT is usually a lot better at spacing something like that out but next week is the go home show, meaning we're only going to get the big build to Toronto plus a few matches. I certainly wasn't bored here but I saw all four of these teams last week, meaning this wasn't the most interesting show in the world.

Results

Authors of Pain b. DIY – Last Chapter to Ciampa

TM61 b. Sanity – Rollup to Wolfe

Ember Moon b. Rachel Evers – Eclipse

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NXT – November 2, 2016: The

Hot Tag To Toronto

NXT

Date: November 2, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Corey Graves, Tom Phillips

We're down to three shows before heading north to Toronto and that means it's time to start hammering out the rest of the Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic. The quarterfinals begin tonight and we'll need to get down to the finals in the next three weeks. Some of the matches have been taped at house shows so it might be time to take a field trip. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

We're going straight to San Jose, California for the first quarterfinal match.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic Quarterfinals: Roderick Strong/Austin Aries vs. TM61

So here's the thing: Austin Aries has a fractured orbital bone and is unable to compete so Austin suggests we have a singles match to determine who advances (assuming that's not made really obvious by the stipulations). Regal comes out to say that's cool with him and TM61 agrees.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic Quarterfinals: Roderick Strong vs. Shane Thorn

At least I don't have to remember which is which. Shane does a very complicated spin out of a wristlock before kicking Strong in the face. A standing moonsault gets two but Strong's first backbreaker puts Thorn down on the top turnbuckle as we take a break. Back with Thorn hitting a good looking dropkick to put both guys down. We hit an Australian uppercut train until another backbreaker gives Strong two. He really can hit those things from everywhere and he makes them look different enough to keep it fresh.

Strong tries a superplex but gets knocked down for Alberto Del Rio's

top rope double stomp (Fans: "SI SI SI!"). A Falcon Arrow gets two on Strong, followed by a sitout powerbomb to bring Aries up to the apron. Strong kicks Miller down but walks into a small package to send TM61 to the final four at 10:45.

Rating: B-. This was just about all it needed to be with Thorn sending the team on, as you kind of had to know they would given Aries' injury. Strong continues to look good and this is more of a storyline loss than anything else. TM61 making a strong run in this tournament would do a lot for them as they haven't really set themselves apart yet so this could be their big moment.

Samoa Joe and Shinsuke Nakamura will sign the contract next week.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic Quarterfinals: DIY vs. Revival

Non-title. Actually hang on a second as Scott Dawson is on crutches. Dawson has hurt everything in his knee and it would cripple a normal man (Dawson: "Like you two.") but a little rest will make a man like him just fine. Therefore, the Revival is sitting this one out and DIY can have a pass to the next round. I like this much better than A, wasting another edition of a great series and B, having either team lose a match. No match.

Gargano and Ciampa are ready for whoever they face next.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic Quarterfinals: Rich Swann/No Way Jose vs. Authors of Pain

Back to San Jose. Akum and Jose start things off with No Way being driven straight into the corner. Some dancing sends the bull charging through the ropes and a big right hand actually staggers him a bit. Swann comes in for an assisted hurricanrana which really just annoys Akum. Instead it's off to Razar but Swann keeps the speed up with a dropkick to stagger him. For some reason Rich decides to dive onto both Authors at the same time but it takes Jose diving onto all three to put them down.

Back in and the beating begins with Akum throwing Rich into the corner for a running splash from Razar. Paul Ellering even gets in a little choking of his own on the bottom rope like the good old

school manager he is. A spinning kick to Razar's face gives Rich a breather and an enziguri to Akum allows the hot tag to Jose (BIG pop for that). A TKO drops Akum for two but Razar sends Swann into the steps. The lack of a partner means Jose gets caught in the Last Chapter for the pin at 8:06.

Rating: C. The more I see of the Authors, the more I like them. They don't need to be anything more than a pair of big guys who can beat the heck out of people. More importantly though, they get in just enough trouble to make you believe they could be in danger before taking someone's head off. That leaves the opening of the right team being able to outlast them and then beat them, which makes them more interesting.

Video on Mickie James.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic Quarterfinals: Sanity vs. TJ Perkins vs. Kota Ibushi

Wolfe and Ibushi start things off with a headlock slowing Kota down so much that it's off to TJ for the always broken up first kneebar. Fulton comes in and gets kneebarred as well with Wolfe's save not working. Back from a break with the cruiserweights starting up their dives until TJ gets pulled out of the air. A slam sends him onto Wolfe's knees and it's off to the chinlock.

That's switched up to a bearhug to keep Perkins in trouble for a big longer. A shot to the face allows the tag to Kota and it's time for the kicks. The Gold Star Bomb gets two on Wolfe but Eric Young and Nikki Cross get the referee's attention. A suplex/powerslam combo puts Kota away at 12:15.

Rating: C-. This didn't do much for me but I'm starting to dig Sanity a lot more than I ever expected to. Kota wasn't likely going to get very far in this thing due to his lack of a contract but at least the Full Sail fans got a nice treat by seeing him live. I like the idea of regular teams going forward though and that's what we have for the semifinals.

The final four:

Sanity

TM61

DIY

Authors of Pain

Overall Rating: C+. The wrestling was fine here and they moved through an entire round of the tournament in one night with some smart booking decisions. The rest of Toronto's card is mostly set so it's ok to dedicate a full show to one concept like this. I'm looking forward to the final four and that's a big step forward for a tournament that hadn't taken much shape yet.

Results

Shane Thorn b. Roderick Strong – Small package

Authors of Pain b. Rich Swann/No Way Jose – Last Chapter to Jose

Sanity b. Kota Ibushi/TJ Perkins – Suplex/powerslam combination to Ibushi

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NXT – October 5, 2016: I

Love That Concept

NXT

Date: October 5, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

It's time to start a tournament as we have the first round of the Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic kicking off tonight. Last year's event was a lot of fun and set up the NXT Title feud for the next several Takeovers. The finals of this year's tournament will be taking place at Takeover: Toronto in November so let's get to it.

The opening video talks about the Dusty Classic returning this year.

Opening sequence.

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

Harv and Gurv Shira dance a lot before the bell so Razar puts Harv on the top rope for some clubberin. Gurv comes in and gets beaten down as well, setting up the Russian legsweep and clothesline combination (now dubbed the Last Chapter) for the pin at 1:47.

Dan Matha arrives tonight.

Rich Swann vs. Patrick Clark

Clark looks like he's wearing Prince style gear. Even Swann looks confused here. Rich does some dancing punches in the corner until he gets caught in a spinebuster. The fans sing Swann's theme song and he makes a quick comeback with a running kick in the corner. A running moonsault puts Clark away at 2:58.

We look back at Cedric Alexander and Andrade Cien Almas facing off a few weeks back and joining forces in the tournament as a result.

Video of Asuka squashing Liv Morgan last week. After the match, Billie Kay and Peyton Royce laughed at Morgan's loss.

Peyton Royce vs. Danielle Kamela

Kamela starts fast with a small package and cross body for two each. Peyton sends her into the corner for some long legged choking and forearms to the chest. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Kamela fights up for handspring elbow, only to get kned in the head. A fisherman's suplex gives Peyton the pin at 3:44.

Rating: D+. The wrestling wasn't much but it was a good sign that they're actually trying to make some new names both in the division and in the promotion as a whole. Royce and Kay are fine as replacements for Dana Brooke and Emma as the heel team, though I can't imagine them being much of a threat to Asuka.

Bobby Roode is way too fired up for the first round match in the Dusty Classic. He doesn't want to talk about Sanity when everyone is talking about Glorious Ten. "It will be glorious when we're victorious." Roode rushes Dillinger out before he can say anything.

Dan Matha comes out (looking like a cross between Matt Morgan and Nathan Jones) for his debut but here's Samoa Joe to beat him down instead. Joe asks Regal how many more have to suffer like this one here.

Rich Swann and No Way Jose have teamed up due to a love of dancing.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic First Round: Andrade Cien Almas/Cedric Alexander vs. Revival

Non-title. Alexander and Dawson start things off with Cedric getting shouldered down. Everything breaks down and the Revival is dropkicked out to the floor and a backdrop does it all over again. A big flip dive from Cedric takes the champs down again and it's all Alexander/Almas in the first four minutes. Revival finally gets it together by suckering Almas into a blindside forearm as we take a break.

Back with Dawson getting two off a northern lights suplex as the champs start in on Almas' arm. The fans want Cedric and an enziguri from Almas gives them what they want. Everything breaks down again and Alexander gets two off a sunset flip into a bridge. Almas has knocked out to the floor though and it's the Shatter Machine to send

the Revival on at 12:40.

Rating: B. I liked this more than I was expecting to as Almas is looking better while Alexander looks like one of the most natural newcomers to WWE in a very long time. Revival has to advance here and that's the only possibly outcome they could have, especially in the first round. Someone almost has to take them out though as you have Gargano/Ciampa and the Authors of Pain looming for them.

Post match, Almas beats Cedric down and sends him into the post. Almas soaks in the YOU SUCK chants to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. Another fast paced show with every story hitting perfectly. Almas turning is long overdue and is another example of NXT seeing something not working and changing course as a result. That's close to blasphemy in WWE but down here, it's what you do when something isn't going right. NXT actually pays attention and fixes things because they listen to their audience. I love that concept.

Results

Authors of Pain b. Bollywood Boyz – Last Chapter to Gurv

Rich Swann b. Patrick Clark – Running moonsault

Peyton Royce b. Danielle Kamela – Fisherman's suplex

Revival b. Cedric Alexander/Andrade Cien Almas – Shatter Machine to Alexander

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NXT – September 28, 2016: Dusting Off the Classic

NXT

Date: September 28, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

This is an interesting time for NXT as we're still moving closer to Toronto but it's still too early to really know a lot of the card. We do however have a new #1 contender to the Women's Title in Liv Morgan, who Asuka agreed to face without seeming that worried about it. We've also got some cruiserweights around so maybe they'll make an appearance tonight. Let's get to it.

General Manager William Regal announces the second annual Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic Tournament, comprised of sixteen teams with the finals coming in Toronto. First round matches begin next week.

Opening sequence. Total time taken on Then, Now and Forever plus Regal's announcement: seventy two seconds.

Tye Dillinger vs. Angelo Dawkins

Dillinger does his cartwheel to start and says that's a ten. He mocks Dawkins' mixing bowl thing (Has that EVER been explained?) and avoids a spinning splash in the corner. A flying forearm and Russian leg sweep set up the Tyebreaker for the pin on Dawkins at 2:25.

Post match here's Bobby Roode to say that was.....impressive. Roode came here to propose a tag team to enter the Dusty Classic.

Dillinger shakes on it and Perfectly Glorious is formed. Graves: "HALLELUJAH!"

Connor's Cure video.

Hideo Itami is ready to face an athlete like Lince Dorado, who has the heart Austin Aries is lacking. Maybe Aries needs to be put to sleep, again.

Ealy Brothers vs. Revival

Non-title and the Ealy Brothers are identical twins named Gabriel and Uriel. Actually never mind as here's Samoa Joe to beat up the brothers. Revival slowly backs away and applauds Joe as they leave. Joe puts this on Regal and gets in a few more shots on the twins for fun.

Dan Matha arrives next week.

Mandy Rose vs. Ember Moon

Rose actually hits a heck of a forearm to start but gets kicked in the ribs for her efforts. A springboard crossbody gets two and Mandy is already in big trouble. Something like an abdominal stretch slows Moon down and a clothesline gets two. A tilt-a-whirl into a facebuster (Dalton Castle's Bang A Rang) gives Mandy another near fall but Ember sends her into the buckle, setting up the Eclipse for the pin on Mandy at 3:09.

Rating: C-. If Rose can dye her hair red, Eva Marie is out of a job. Mandy has a comparable look and can actually wrestle a coherent match, putting her light years ahead of Eva, whose whole gimmick is that she can't even be trusted to actually, you know, wrestle. Moon is almost guaranteed to be the next big challenger to Asuka and that's just fine.

Johnny Gargano and Tommaso Ciampa want to win the Dusty Classic and then get the Tag Team Titles from the Revival.

Authors of Pain vs. Jesus Yurnet/Jonathan Cruz

Yurnet is slightly better known as Mr. 450. The Authors go right after them to start and Cruz is gorilla pressed out to the floor. The Russian legsweep/clothesline wraps Cruz up at 1:10.

Post match Paul Ellering says the next chapter will bring pain and that is all we need to know.

Regal can't get hold of Shinsuke Nakamura so he can't give us an update. He can however tell us about some Dusty Classic teams, or at least he could if Blake and Murphy didn't come in and start bickering some more. Regal tells them to go argue elsewhere.

Women's Title: Asuka vs. Liv Morgan

Asuka is defending and we get dueling LET'S GO LIV/ASUKA'S GONNA KILL YOU chants. They lock up to start and Liv's dropkick has no effect as Asuka takes her down and puts on something like the Rings

of Saturn for the tap out at 55 seconds. This is EXACTLY what it should have been and is probably a record of some sort.

Asuka says no one is ready for her.

Next week: Cedric Alexander/Andrade Cien Almas vs. Revival in a first round Dusty Classic match.

Lince Dorado vs. Hideo Itami

They shake hands to start. Dorado misses an early charge into the corner but backflips away from one of Hideo's kicks. A jumping knee to the back of Hideo's neck doesn't do much good as an even harder kick to the chest drops Dorado. Lince comes right back with a dropkick to send Itami outside, setting up an Asai moonsault to drive Itami onto the ramp.

Back from a break with Itami getting kicked again, only to get in the tornado DDT neck snap across the top. Dorado's Tajiri handspring is almost countered into the GTS but Dorado reversed into a crucifix for two. Lince misses a shooting star press and that means it's time for the running kicks. The GTS puts Dorado away at 10:22.

Rating: B. This summed up so many of the problems with the cruiserweight division in a ten minute match. First of all, it wouldn't be a stretch to have Itami as a cruiserweight but because of who he generally fights, he's a heavyweight. Even though he is a heavyweight though, he had issues dealing with Dorado here.

Ignoring that though, it's not a big deal for the cruiserweight to be fighting the heavyweight. Over on Raw, so far at least, it's been cruiserweights vs. cruiserweights and that's almost all it can be. Once that stops, why should a cruiserweight go after their own title if they can fight for the heavyweight title? Now that we've seen people like Daniel Bryan, CM Punk, Seth Rollins and Finn Balor win the top titles in the company, it's pretty ridiculous to have them fight over a weight class title. The match was good though as Itami has gotten a lot better since coming back.

Post match here's Austin Aries to jump Itami but has to run away when Itami gets back up. Hideo tells him to get back in here to end the show.

Overall Rating: A-. As is so often the case, the wrestling wasn't the point here. They managed to fit in five matches (and introduce a sixth) while also announcing a tournament and doing a run-in after

the main event in fifty two minutes, including commercials. There's something so fun about watching a show when they know exactly what they want to do and then go out and do it so well. This show is quick and easy to watch but also entertaining and well put together at the same time. You can feel the Ryan Ward effect on here and that's a good thing.

Results

Tye Dillinger b. Angelo Dawkins – Tyebreaker

Ember Moon b. Mandy Rose – Eclipse

Authors of Pain b. Jesus Yurnet/Jonathan Cruz – Russian
legsweep/clothesline combo to Cruz

Asuka b. Liv Morgan – Double armbar

Hideo Itami b. Lince Dorado – GTS

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