

# NXT – March 28, 2018: Just Like the Old Days (of AWESOME)



IMG Credit: WWE

## NXT

Date: March 28, 2018

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Nigel McGuinness, Percy Watson

We're almost to New Orleans and that means we're getting closer to the official announcement of Tommaso Ciampa vs. Johnny Gargano. Earlier today, WWE posted a video of Gargano coming to Ciampa's house at 3am, prompting Ciampa to say he would have to talk to William Regal about this. That's a very encouraging line. Let's get to it.

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

Earlier today Ciampa arrived but wouldn't talk to reporters. He came up to Regal and asked what kind of place Regal is running here. Regal agrees that it's on him so the solution is Gargano vs. Ciampa in an unsanctioned match at Takeover. If Johnny wins, he's reinstated in NXT. Regal: "This time, you're going to have to do it yourself." This was a quick segment but it felt like a conversation these two might have. It didn't feel scripted and it felt natural. Why does that NEVER happen on the main

roster?

Opening sequence.

Here's Regal in the arena for his big announcement. This is the place where we determine the best in the world so it's time to announce a new championship. At Takeover: New Orleans, the first NXT North American Champion will be crowned. Regal talks about how this will be a counterpart to the United Kingdom Championship but here's the debuting EC3 (called that with no Ethan Carter III ever mentioned).

Mauro asked him what EC3 stood for and apparently it's the formula for success. The fans chant for him and EC3 says it should keep going because he deserves it. He brags about his theme song (which mentions his name several times and says that he's in the top 1%) but thinks Regal has gone above and beyond to create a brand new championship for him. Fans: "NXTHREE! NXTHREE!"

That's a step too far for Regal but EC3 will be competing for the title. It will be EC3 and five other competitors in a six man ladder match to crown the first champion. EC3 isn't sure about that one but the fans thank Regal. That's cool with EC3 because you can put the entire locker room against him and he'll prove that he's the top 1%. EC3 is already one of the most charismatic guys NXT has ever had so this was a very successful debut segment.

Charly Caruso updates the Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic, which is down to the semifinals:

Authors of Pain

Street Profits

Roderick Strong/Pete Dunne

Sanity

TM61 is frustrated that they can't win and keep having to go back to the drawing board. The interview is cut short as Shayna Baszler and Ember Moon are in a fight in the next room. Referees break it up as they're

trying everything they can to make it seem like Ember has a chance.

### Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic Semifinals: Street Profits vs. Authors of Pain

Ford yells at Razar to start and gets shoved in the face. Dawkins comes in instead and gets pummeled in the corner for his efforts. The Profits actually take the big guys down and Ford takes a sip from the cup before offering it to Paul Ellering. That's a no as the cup is knocked out of Ford's hands, allowing the Authors to jump him. The Last Chapter ends Dawkins at 2:34. This was nothing.

Charly talks about the other semifinal match tonight.

Regal announces Adam Cole as the second competitor when Velveteen Dream comes up. Dream: "You're looking well." Regal: "I know." Dream wants in the match to give the fans an experience. Regal agrees so Dream is the third entrant.

### Lars Sullivan vs. John Silver

Back to back tosses into the corner and a military press powerslam sets up a top rope headbutt. The Freak Accident ends the slaughter at 1:42. In this case, better to be Quick Silver than Long John.

Regal runs into Sullivan and offers him a spot in the ladder match. Sullivan says that sounds fantastic and he will bring the destruction unequivocally and categorically. He imagines a ladder in his hands to inflict more punishment. For next week though, he wants Killian Dain. Killian is in the ladder match as well but Regal makes the match too.

Dakota Kai comes out for a match but we cut to the parking lot where Andrade Cien Almas attacks Aleister Black, including shoving his face into a cooler. Almas drags him into the arena and throws him into the ring for a chair to the back. The title is held up as Almas shouts about being the champion.

### Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic Semifinals: Sanity vs. Roderick Strong/Pete Dunne

Strong and Wolfe start things off with an early slam putting Roderick down and drawing the partners in for a staredown. Young and Dunne go into the corner and it's another staredown to annoy the referee. Wolfe takes over on Dunne and we take a break. Back with Dunne in more trouble and Young getting two.

This time it's Young getting caught in the wrong corner and having his chest ripped off with chops. A middle rope knee gives Dunne two and we hit a hammerlock. It's time to go after the arm with a double wristlock but Young powers him up with a suplex for the break. That's enough for the tag to Wolfe and a Death Valley Driver gives him two. Everything breaks down and Dunne punches Wolfe out of the air but gets caught with a neckbreaker.

Young throws Strong off the top and drops the elbow for two of his own. Dunne and Wolfe are back in and Pete kicks Young down, setting up End of Heartache on Wolfe. It's back to the legal Young, who gets caught in Strong's belly to back faceplant into a Downward Spiral from Dunne (good idea, not the best execution) for the pin at 10:26.

**Rating:** B-. Good match here and a smart idea to give Dunne and Strong another win over an established team. I know it's not a long tournament but it's enough to make them look like a big deal in a hurry. The fans love both guys and a match between the two of them and the Authors could be fun. Nice match here, as Sanity continues to be a great pair of hands for something like this.

Regal announces the final competitor, who happens to be in his office. That would be....Ricochet. In case the crowd wasn't hyped up enough.

**Overall Rating:** A-. Sweet goodness NXT is great. In an hour they set up the grudge match of the year, introduced a new character, set up a six man ladder match for a new title, had a good match and sent the fans out with a big debut. I've said this many times but they come in with a plan and execute it to near perfection. This show breezed by and I'm WAY more excited for Takeover than I was. Great show, which happens quite often.

Results

Authors of Pain b. Street Profits – Last Chapter to Dawkins

Lars Sullivan b. John Silver – Freak Accident

Roderick Strong/Pete Dunne b. Sanity – Double faceplant to Young

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**205 Live – March 13, 2018:  
The Sign of a Great  
Tournament**



IMG Credit: WWE

## 205 Live

Date: March 13, 2018

Location: Bankers Life Fieldhouse, Indianapolis, Indiana

Commentators: Vic Joseph, Nigel McGuinness

It's time to send someone to Wrestlemania. With four weeks left before the big show, we have two semifinal matches to get through before we know the finals of the Cruiserweight Title tournament. Tonight we have Cedric Alexander vs. Roderick Strong, which has the potential to be a heck of a showdown. Let's get to it.

Here's last week's episode if you need a recap.

The opening recap gives us a recap to open up, including a preview of tonight's semifinal.

Opening sequence.

### Hideo Itami/Akira Tozawa vs. Lince Dorado/Gran Metalik

The build towards the Cruiserweight Tag Team Titles continues. Dorado and Tozawa start things off and they actually go technical early on. It's too early for Tozawa to hit the big kick so Dorado shoulders him down and dances a bit. Stereo dropkicks give us a standoff until Dorado's second attempt works a bit better. Metalik comes in and gets caught in a hurricanrana before it's off to Itami for some missed kicks.

Dorado actually gets the better of a strike off with Itami until Hideo

takes his head off with a kick to the face. It's time to get even more aggressive as Itami takes down his knee pad, only to do his reverse kick to the face of a downed Dorado. That's such an arrogant looking move and it works so well. Tozawa's missile dropkick gets two but he and Dorado kick each other in the face for a double knockout.

The hot tag brings in Metalik to clean house, including a reverse Sling Blade to drop Itami. With Metalik on the apron and leaning through the ropes, Dorado hits a great looking springboard to the floor. Metalik's springboard bangs up his knee though and Itami grabs his Twisting Stunner for the pin at 8:08.

**Rating:** C+. I'm still not sure on having a tag division but it could be an option if they build up some actual teams. Lucha House Party and the resident Japanese team are a good start but you need more than two or three teams to fight over titles. This was good enough with some of the dives looking awesome, but nothing that hasn't been done before.

Post match Itami and Dorado nearly get in a fight but Kalisto and Tozawa break things up.

Video on Roderick Strong, featuring a lot of the same clips from his introduction videos in NXT. He's ready to face anyone of any style.

### Jack Gallagher vs. Murphy Myers

Drake Maverick is on commentary. Jack actually lets him go up against the ropes to start before calmly snapping into Murphy's arm. A few forearms and an enziguri actually stagger Gallagher but he catches Myers in the ring skirt and hammers away. The headbutt ends Murphy at 2:38.

Video on Cedric Alexander, who has earned the right to be here after coming up short in a chase for the title before. He can do anything and nothing will stop him.

Mustafa Ali is in a dark hallway with a shadow approaching from behind. He talks about Drew Gulak attacking Mark Andrews after the match was over but Ali isn't scared of the bully. The shadow reaches him and the interview cuts off. These things have certainly been different and in

this case they've made him stand out very well.

### Cruiserweight Title Tournament Semifinals: Roderick Strong vs. Cedric Alexander

Neither can maintain a front facelock to start and they roll into a standoff. Strong gets two off a dropkick as Ali is watching in the back. A backdrop nearly sends Strong onto his feet but he's fine enough to break up a springboard to send Cedric face first into the turnbuckle. Cedric seems to come up favoring his ribs so Strong grabs a seated abdominal stretch.

Back up and Cedric tries the handspring enziguri but Strong is waiting on him with a dropkick for a sweet counter. It's off to a chinlock with Strong shouting that no one wants Cedric to be champion. Now that's just cruel, yet also good trash talk at the same time. Cedric gets back up and hits a kick to the face, followed by a springboard cutter to send Strong outside. The springboard clothesline gets two more and something like a Michinoku Driver is good for the same.

Another springboard is countered into a backbreaker attempt but Cedric counters that into a crucifix for two. Strong isn't going to be denied though and gets the first backbreaker to take over again. Back up and a quick Neutralizer sets up the Lumbar Check....for two as Strong gets to the ropes. I don't recall anyone ever surviving that, which makes the escape so much better. Why doesn't WWE get that concept elsewhere?

They head to the apron with Strong slapping on a Torture Rack but throwing Cedric BACK FIRST ONTO THE BUCKLE in a scary looking crash. That's not enough for a countout so Strong grabs a top rope superplex, giving Cedric that great lost look on the impact. That's still not enough for the win so Strong knees him in the face and grabs End of Heartache for two with Cedric getting a boot on the ropes.

One heck of an elbow to the face drops Strong but Cedric can't follow up. It's time for the slugout but Strong can't get the Stronghold. He can get another jumping knee to the face, only to get small packaged go send Cedric to Wrestlemania at 14:57. The shocked look on Cedric's face is a great plus.

**Rating:** B+. These two were beating the heck out of each other and you bought the idea that they were both willing to do anything they could to get the win. I had a blast with this and Cedric is more than worthy of going to Wrestlemania. That's the mark of a great tournament: you could see anyone winning, and that's been the case with the final four. Great match here and one of the best ever on 205 Live.

They look at each other in a sign of respect. Strong leaves and Cedric says he earned this. Every morning he wakes up with his four year old daughter telling him he's a champion. At Wrestlemania, that becomes reality. More good stuff on the mic here as I want to see Cedric win the title. That's hard to do, especially with how low level the title really is. Well done indeed.

**Overall Rating:** B. That main event is more than enough to carry the show but you can also see some stories being added to the show. You can only go so far on the tournament alone so having something new, including the possibility of Gallagher vs. Maverick, gives me some hope for the future. Good show here, as 205 Live continues to rock.

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# 205 Live – February 27, 2018: Drake Maverick's Vision



IMG Credit: WWE

## 205 Live

Date: February 27, 2018

Location: Staples Center, Los Angeles, California

Commentators: Vic Joseph, Nigel McGuinness

It's time for another round of the tournament as we're in the final eight. This tournament has completely reinvigorated the show and actually made it fun to watch. That wasn't the case for over a year but better late than never. Tonight we'll have half of the semifinals set so let's get to it.

[Here's last week's show.](#)

And the show featuring this week's quarterfinalists.

And the other show featuring this week's quarterfinalists.

We open with a recap of last week's first round matches. These quick recaps are really effective, especially since they don't take up a bunch of time.

Opening sequence.

### Cruiserweight Title Tournament Quarterfinals: TJP vs. Cedric Alexander

Both say they're going to Wrestlemania and winning the title. The fans are behind the hometown boy in TJP as they hit the mat for a wrestling sequence. Back up and a flip off goes to Alexander, who counters TJP's hurricanrana into a powerbomb for two. Back up and a headscissors takes Cedric down, meaning we can hit the dab. Cedric starts working on the arm with his feet on TJP's face but a whip into the corner allows TJP to get in a boot to the head. A dropkick sends TJP outside but he's back in fast enough to block the big flip dive.

Now it's TJP's turn to start in on the arm, sending Alexander straight to the ropes. Some kneedrops and a chinlock with an arm trap keep TJP in control. That's not enough for him though as he grapevines the legs in a standing Indian deathlock but steps on Cedric's head for a nice change of pace. The slingshot hilo bangs the ribs up a little bit more and it's back to the chinlock. A good looking jumping back elbow to the jaw gets two on Cedric and it's off to an abdominal stretch/octopus hold hybrid.

Cedric reverses a belly to back suplex into a crossbody and chills in the corner (where a turnbuckle pad is upside down). The Neuralizer gives Cedric two and the springboard Downward Spiral is good for the same. The Lumbar Check is reversed into the double chickenwing gutbuster to put Cedric down again. TJP dropkicks the knee out but Cedric kicks him in the...I think top of the head to knock TJP outside. Now the slingshot dive connects, only to bang up Cedric's knee even more.

Back in and the knee gets hurt again and there's the kneebar. Cedric's crawl to the ropes is enough for the break so TJP settles for a rollup with trunks for two instead. A double clothesline gives us a double knockdown. It's TJP up first with the springboard forearm (no nipup due to exhaustion though) and the kneebar goes on again. Cedric rolls halfway around the ring for the break this time and it's time for a strike off. TJP gets the better of it and tries the Detonation Kick but Cedric slips out and grabs the Lumbar Check to advance at 17:30.

**Rating:** B. They did a good job here with the more complete wrestler in

TJP breaking Cedric down but Alexander just wasn't going to be denied and had to hit his big move for the win. I didn't buy the idea of Cedric tapping but there was a reason to believe that TJP, who is the master of these tournaments, could pin him instead. Good storytelling here and I was digging the match.

Drake Maverick talks about how important cruiserweights can be, especially with someone pointing them in the right direction. The last few weeks have been his vision for 205 Live.

Last week, Mustafa Ali was in the fight of his life but he looked at the Wrestlemania sign and kept going. Next week he faces the bigger and stronger Buddy Murphy, but Buddy isn't strong enough to break him.

Buddy says if Mustafa thought he was in a fight last week, he has no idea what he's in for next week.

#### Cruiserweight Title Tournament Quarterfinals: Kalisto vs. Roderick Strong

The winner gets Cedric in the semifinals. Roderick hammerlocks him to start and a wristlock puts Kalisto on the mat. Back up and a headscissors takes Strong down as Cedric is watching backstage. A backbreaker out of nowhere gives Roderick one but he gets hurricanranaed to the floor. Kalisto snaps off a big dive and dropkicks Strong underneath the ropes for good measure.

Strong is fast enough to send him into the apron though and a release suplex drops Kalisto on the announcers' table as things get a lot more intense in a hurry. That actually draws the first 205 Live chant that I've heard in at least a year, so maybe there's something to this new style. Back in and Strong stomps away but Kalisto is up at one. Another backbreaker gets another two and Strong, apparently a heel, mocks the Lucha Dance.

Strong tries a modified Gory Special but Kalisto armdrags his way out and hits the basement hurricanrana. Kalisto comes back with the usual and another basement hurricanrana gets two. The Salida Del Sol is broken up though and Strong grabs an Angle Slam for two of his own. A double underhook powerbomb is countered into a rollup to give Kalisto two and

both guys are down again.

Kalisto catches Strong on top and stands up there with him, allowing Strong to pick him up for what looked like a slam. Instead Kalisto held on and rolled through to drop Strong though in a really unique looking spot (even Nigel said he had no idea what it was) for two. Strong finally knees him in the head though and another backbreaker sets up End of Heartache to end Kalisto at 11:42.

**Rating:** B-. Strong's mid-match heel turn was a little weird but he's one of those guys who can wrestle as a face or a heel just as well and Cedric needs a heel to face anyway. Beating Kalisto makes Strong look even better and now we should be in for a good match two weeks from now. Kalisto is going to be fine of course and it's not like a loss here hurts him all that much. Good, but not as good as the opener.

**Overall Rating:** B+. Now that's more like it. Just like this week's Mixed Match Challenge (the other main roster tournament), things got a lot better once they got past the last first round matches. We're into the matches between big names now and that makes for some very fun shows. This was about 45 minutes long and felt like half of that, which is some high praise for a WWE show anymore.

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

## NXT

Date: February 14, 2018

Location: Center Stage Theater, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Nigel McGuinness, Percy Watson, Mauro Ranallo

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

We open with a quick preview of both title matches.

Opening sequence.

### United Kingdom Title: Roderick Strong vs. Pete Dunne

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

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

We take another break and come back with Dunne grabbing the arm again.

This time he cranks it back ala Lucha Underground's Pentagon Dark, followed by a sitout powerbomb for two. A snap German suplex puts Strong down again but he dives into a dropkick to give Roderick two this -time. Another backbreaker is countered into an exchange of rollups for two and both guys are down again.

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

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

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

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

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

TM61 vs. Andrew Duckworth/John Skyler

Thorn drives Skyler into the corner to start and takes Duckworth down with a suplex. A few shots to Thorn's knee get him into the corner though

and trouble begins. It's over in very short order though as Thorn grabs a belly to back suplex. The hot tag brings in Miller to start cleaning house in short order. Thunder Valley ends Skyler at 2:12. Basically a squash.

#### Women's Title: Shayna Baszler vs. Ember Moon

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

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

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

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

#### Results

Pete Dunne b. Roderick Strong – Bitter End

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

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

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## **205 Live – February 6, 2018: What The Tournament Needed**

### **205 Live**

Date: February 6, 2018

Location: Sprint Center, Kansas City, Missouri

Commentators: Vic Joseph, Nigel McGuinness

We'll continue the tournament this week with two more second round matches. The whole thing started last week with new General Manager Drake Maverick starting the tournament and bringing in some outside names to fill in the brackets. That's the case this week as well with Roderick Strong making his 205 Live debut. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Maverick's debut and last week's first round matches.

Opening sequence.

Cruiserweight Title Tournament First Round: Kalisto vs. Lince Dorado

They shake hands to start and it's time to go, though they're rather intense as they let go. Dorado takes him to the mat before trading some fast armdrags. A double flip up gives us a standoff and the fans know what they're in for. Back up and Kalisto is thrown into the air, only to land on on Dorado's shoulders. Well of course he does.

Dorado shoves him off but charges into a pair of knees in the corner. Kalisto sends him outside for a suicide dive into the announcers' table but Dorado is right back up with a running flip dive. Back in and Dorado starts in on a reverse chinlock before we hit a chinlock. Dorado takes too much time going up though and has to bail out, allowing Kalisto to score with a superkick.

They head up top and of course that means a super hurricanrana to bring Kalisto back down. Dorado is impressing me here and that's not something that happens too often. Kalisto is right back up with the springboard corkscrew body block for two, followed by a super victory roll for the same. The rolling kick to the head is blocked though and Dorado is right back with the handspring Stunner (The Golden Rewind. Ehhhhhhh not feeling that one.).

The shooting star press crushes Kalisto but he's smart enough to roll to the floor. Back in and the Salida Del Sol connects but Dorado grabs the rope at the last second. You know, like at two. Kalisto is back up and tries a reverse hurricanrana but Dorado just kind of slides over Kalisto's back. Not that it matters as the Salida Del Sol sends Kalisto to the second round at 11:35.

**Rating:** B. This is the kind of stuff the tournament needed to have and it's easily the best I've ever seen from Dorado. They were flying all over the place here and looking awesome in the process, especially the Salida Del Sol. That's one of the best finishers in the entire company today and it's very cool to see him advance like this. Let us see what he can do against a better opponent. Or on the main roster with Dorado against the Bar.

Long video on Roderick Strong, which I believe first aired back on NXT. His family fell apart when he was a kid and now he uses wrestling to keep

things together. He also has a family of his own and they mean the world to him.

Mustafa Ali photo bombs Cedric Alexander. Cedric: "Everybody's ok until their lumbar gets checked!"

TJP reads Tweets and says this time it's about him instead of everyone else.

Next week: Mark Andrews vs. Akira Tozawa in a first round match.

Video on Andrews, who is quite the high flier.

Tozawa thinks he'll win and asks a backstage worker for his opinion. The backstage guy likes Andrews so Tozawa fires him.

Tony Nese and Drew Gulak comes in to see Maverick and Drake isn't pleased with either of them. Drew is a goof and Tony has abs. The train has left the station though and next week it's the two of them in the first round of the tournament. One of them needs to step up to the plate. Mavericks' delivery continues to be a very strong point.

### Cruiserweight Title Tournament First Round: Hideo Itami vs. Roderick Strong

Itami headscissors him to the mat to start but has to flip out of a bow and arrow hold. The half nelson backbreaker doesn't work on Itami and we're already on a headlock to slow Strong down. Itami is right back up with some kicks to the head, including a middle rope kick to the back of the head for two.

The tornado DDT into the guillotine is broken up though and Strong stays on the back, as is his custom. A pumphandle backbreaker gives Strong two (Strong: "COME ON KENTA! COME ON HIDEO!"), followed by a dropkick for the same. Strong misses a charge into the corner though and a DDT takes him down. Itami scores with Sami Zayn's Helluva Kick and a top rope clothesline for two each.

It's Strong's turn for a big move so an Angle Slam takes Itami down. A trip to the floor sees Itami's back bouncing off the barricade as Strong

certainly has a target. Back in and Itami grabs a quick Falcon Arrow for two, followed by a running hip attack with Strong hung on the ropes. The jumping knee is countered into a failed Strong Hold attempt. This time Itami reverses into the very modified Rings of Saturn, sending Strong bailing to the ropes.

A gutbuster into the Cloud 9 (a spinning belly to back faceplant) gives Strong two more but Itami takes him up. That means a super Falcon Arrow (more like a superplex with a bit of a spin) for another near fall, followed by the running hesitation dropkick. Back up and Strong scores with the jumping knee to the face. The End of Heartache (suplex into a backbreaker) sends Strong to the next round at 17:02.

**Rating:** B+. These guys were beating each other up out there and that's the kind of match they needed to have. Strong is starting to figure out how to work the WWE style and he might be better off on the main roster full time rather than being down in NXT. There's only so much he's going to get out of it and we seem to have passed that point. Itami....I really don't know anymore. It never quite worked down in NXT and I'm not exactly seeing it clicking here. The talent is there but for some reason it's not coming out, which just happens sometimes. What he's doing isn't working though and that needs to change.

**Overall Rating:** A-. This tournament has done wonders for 205 Live and I've been liking it more and more in several weeks. The Cruiserweight Classic was built up so well because it was an all action show. We spent over a year watching 205 Live try to be half action and half story and while I do like the stories, the action takes it to far higher levels. I'm genuinely interested in seeing who the final four entrants are going to be and I haven't had that kind of curiosity around this show since it debuted. Keep this stuff up and 205 Live will be one of the best WWE shows going.

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# **NXT – January 31, 2018: British, Strong, Style**

## **NXT**

Date: January 31, 2018

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Percy Watson, Mauro Ranallo

It's time for another of the pre-Takeover shows as we haven't had time to do more tapings, meaning we have some dark matches from this weekend's Takeover: Philadelphia. This includes a match between Roderick Strong and Tyler Bate with the winner getting a UK Title match against Pete Dunne at some point in the future. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap package from Takeover, including a focus on the incredible main event.

Opening sequence.

## **Nikki Cross vs. Lacey Evans**

Nikki is all over her to start but gets kicked out to the floor. Evans gets tied in the ring skirt and the fans are WAY behind Nikki as she forearmwrestles Lacey in the chest. Back in and Lacey hits a slingshot Bronco Buster in the corner and is booted out of the building. That earns her a

kick to the chest and the swinging fisherman's neckbreaker is good for the pin on Evans 2:35.

Video on Saturday's Tag Team Title match.

Video on the Women's Title match, including Shayna Baszler choking Ember Moon out after losing.

Baszler says that went as it was supposed to because Moon only survived instead of beating her.

Video on Moon being in the Royal Rumble.

Video on Aleister Black vs. Adam Cole.

Undisputed Era took Cole to the back as he swore vengeance on Sanity.

Next week: Undisputed Era defends against Sanity.

Video on Velveteen Dream vs. Kassius Ohno.

Velveteen Dream says read his trunks. "Dream Over." Dream to the interviewer: "And now you know too. Good talk."

### TM61 vs. Ealy Brothers

Uriel Ealy jumps Shane with forearms to the back but everything breaks down in a hurry with Thorn hitting a running Fosbury Flop onto both Brothers on the floor. The Brothers switch though and Miller gets kicked in the jaw. The beatdown lasts all of a few seconds though as a clothesline gets Miller out of trouble, setting up the hot tag to Thorn. Everything breaks down and Miller hits a moonsault for two with Gabriel making the save. Thunder Valley (the double gorilla press into a sitout spinebuster) is good for the pin on Uriel at 3:18.

**Rating:** C. This was fine for a return showcase match with TM61 looking good. They were only starting to hit their stride when the injury cut them off so they need to pull something off to get back on track. The tag division can always use another team and they could be in the title picture in fairly short order. Thorn looked fine in his return from injury.

Recap of the 2017 Year End Awards.

TM61 says they're a better team than they used to be because they're now mighty, and the mighty don't kneel. Ignore one of them kneeling to set up Thunder Valley.

Long video on Johnny Gargano vs. Andrade Cien Almas, including Tommaso Ciampa attacking Gargano after the match.

Post match Ciampa wouldn't answer questions, including "where have you been". Uh, rehabbing his knee, as everyone knows?

We look at Almas in the Rumble.

Zelina Vega says this was her plan all along and there's no Gargano in sight.

EC3 (Ethan Carter III isn't mentioned) has signed with NXT.

Cole was in the Rumble and faces Killian Dain next week.

### Roderick Strong vs. Tyler Bate

The winner gets a UK Title shot at some point to be announced. They fight over wrist control to start with Bate kicking him in the arm to twist out of a wristlock. Bate scores with a dropkick and nips up into a mustache pose. The airplane spin is countered into a double underhook backbreaker and Strong tosses him HARD into the corner for two.

Back from a break with Strong bending Bate over his back (kind of a bow and arrow with Bate bent over the back instead of the knees). Bate slips out and hits a big boot to the jaw, followed by a middle rope knee to the side of the head. Bate's Liger Kick is followed by a crucifix for two and a rebound clothesline gets the same. The Tyler Driver 97 doesn't work due to the variety of backbreakers and Strong hits the jumping knees to the face. End of Heartache is good for the pin on Bate at 13:38.

**Rating:** B-. The last few minutes were very good with Bate doing more of his ridiculous athletic stuff despite looking like one of the most generic jobbers of all time. Strong winning is the right call as Bate vs.

Dunne should be saved for special occasions and Dunne needs a fresh opponent. Bate will be fine and the fact that he's only 20 is remarkable.

**Overall Rating:** C+. These shows are always hard to rate as there's only so much that can be said with so many recaps. This is designed to be mostly a placeholder show with a big main event and there's nothing wrong with that. Next week will be back to normal and since NXT knows what it's doing, we already have two matches set for the first show of the new tapings. It's so nice to not have to worry about things like moving to the new taping cycle and it's very cool to have a promotion that has figured this stuff out.

### Results

Nikki Cross b. Lacey Evans – Fisherman's neckbreaker

TM61 b. Ealy Brothers – Thunder Valley to Uriel

Roderick Strong b. Tyler Bate – End of Heartache

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# NXT – January 17, 2018: From Atlanta to Philadelphia

## NXT

Date: January 17, 2018

Location: Center Stage Theater, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Nigel McGuinness, Percy Watson

We're still in Atlanta as we're heading towards Philadelphia for the next Takeover. Last week saw the Undisputed Era beat down Aleister Black to end the show, earning Adam Cole an Extreme Rules match with Black in Philadelphia. Odds are we'll get the final card for the next Takeover tonight so let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

We see the shots of the crowd and there's a rather prominent fan with a Britney Spears shirt. I'd wear that.

## Heavy Machinery vs. Tino Sabbatelli/Riddick Moss

As usual, it's a feud over Sabbatelli and Moss' car. Otis runs Sabbatelli over with a hard shoulder to start and Tino isn't sure what to do about that kind of power. Tucker comes in and grabs a front facelock to swing Tino around in a circle, only to have him land in front of Moss. Heavy Machinery crushes Moss between the two of them followed by something like a Worm into an elbow. It's back to Tino to hammer on Otis until a clothesline allows the hot tag to Knight. Everything breaks down and Moss grabs a rollup with his feet on the ropes for the pin at 4:41.

**Rating:** C-. I'm glad Sabbatelli and Moss got a win and it's not the biggest problem in the world as Heavy Machinery has already lost most of their steam. It's also weird to have a power team like Heavy Machinery as good guys but it helps when Sabbatelli and Moss are good rich jerks. Buy something other than the car though.

Cole isn't worried about Black because there are a million and one ways

to hurt him. Bobby Fish and Kyle O'Reilly know everyone wants their titles but they're all in the Era's era. I'm still not sold on that name as Undisputed would just sound better.

We look back at the ending of last week's show with the announcement of the Extreme Rules match. Shouldn't that have aired before the promo?

### Roderick Strong vs. Fabian Aichner

Strong tries a headlock to start as the fans seem split. A leg lariat gives Strong two but Aichner powerslams him out of the air as we take a break. Back with Aichner holding an abdominal stretch until Strong fights out. The Angle Slam is broken up so Strong settles for his first backbreaker. Aichner is right back with a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker of his own and goes up, only to dive into another backbreaker. The Strong Hold (now a Liontamer) is good for the tap out at 7:37.

**Rating:** C+. Aichner has a real future with a great look and an awesome set of skills but he needs a little something more to really make it work. Still though, it's cool to see him getting chances against big names like Strong, who still needs a few more big wins to really get somewhere. He's a good upper midcarder though and you can always use one of those.

Post match Strong says he wants Lars Sullivan, who had already said he wanted to face Killian Dain. So we might be looking at a three way?

Long video on TM-61, who will be back from injury rather soon. They've been out for a very long time. They've been training for years, including training under Harley Race. All the work has been worth it though and they're ready to make it here. They worked their way through a WWE tryout but also were young boys in Japan. Next week we'll get part two, which hopefully is as awesome as this one.

### Aliyah vs. Lacey Evans

Aliyah gets taken down with a wristlock to start but walks into a jawbreaker. Evans is sent to the apron and kicks Aliyah's leg out for a slingshot elbow. A slingshot bronco buster gets two more on Aliyah but

she grabs a northern lights suplex. Back up and Aliyah charges into a right hand in the corner...for the pin at 3:24.

**Rating:** D+. Aliyah is starting to look better but she still needs some more polishing. Evans has a bit of a weird gimmick but it's a little more interesting than some others. Ending a match with a right hand though is rather different as well, but it does make her look a little tougher than you would expect.

Post match Evans says she wants to bring some class to the women's division and she'll start with Nikki Cross. Shayna Baszler comes out and glares at Evans before grabbing her choke on Aliyah, who is still woozy from the right hand. Ember Moon runs in for the save and tells Baszler to try that on her. Baszler says she'll do it when the title is on the line. Moon says name the time.

William Regal makes the title match for Takeover. Zelina Vega comes in to say Velvetene Dream deserves the shot more than Johnny Gargano so they should have a #1 contenders match.

No Way Jose is back next week. I liked the guy, but I hadn't remembered he was gone.

Johnny Gargano comes to the ring and says bring Dream on. This isn't a fluke and this is his time and opportunity. The match is on for next week.

We look back at the Undisputed Era attacking Sanity to avoid the title defense last week.

### Authors of Pain vs. Street Profits

The winners get the title shot in Philadelphia. Akum shoulders Ford down to start and easily pulls him over to the corner so Razar can get in his own shots to the back. The fans are behind the Profits of course as Ford has to fight out of a full nelson. One heck of a full nelson slam gives Razar two and it's off to a chinlock as we take a break.

Back with Ford fighting out of a front facelock and bringing Dawkins in to clean house. A spinebuster/missile dropkick combination gets two on

Akum and that's probably their best shot. The Super Collider into the Last Chapter ends Ford at 9:43 to send the Authors to Philadelphia.

**Rating:** C. The Profits will be back of course but this was a big loss for them. The Authors are in a weird place as they're not being called up to the main roster for whatever reason but there are so many teams around who are more interesting or just better than they are. Throw in the soon to debut War Machine and I'm not sure where they're going.

**Overall Rating:** C+. This was the kind of show that they needed heading into Philadelphia as some of the stories needed a little bit more heat. Tonight helped on those fronts as well as adding two fresh title matches to the card. I'm starting to look forward to Philadelphia, which wasn't the case as we were coming into this show. Hopefully things are even better next week, which tends to be the case around here.

### Results

Tino Sabbatelli/Riddick Moss b. Heavy Machinery – Rollup to Moss

Roderick Strong b. Fabian Aichner – Strong Hold

Lacey Evans b. Aliyah – Right hand

Authors of Pain b. Street Profits – Last Chapter to Ford

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# NXT – January 10, 2018: This Doesn't Feel Right

## NXT

Date: January 10, 2018

Location: Center Stage Theater, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Nigel McGuinness, Percy Watson

We're on some hallowed ground tonight as NXT heads to the former home of WCW Saturday Night. The next three shows will be all about setting up Takeover: Philadelphia, which means we need some more matches announced. A good chunk of the card is already set but NXT somehow manages to make the shows building to the big show entertaining as well. Let's get to it.

The Undisputed Era is ready to start their year of dominance by taking out Sanity once and for all tonight. Adam Cole is ready to start becoming the next NXT Champion. Simple and to the point here with something that you would expect them to say. Just ignore the whole "the beginning of the era of undisputed" making O'Reilly sound like Yoda.

Opening sequence.

The ring is turned to the side here, meaning wrestlers come to a corner when they come down the aisle. It's an awesome visual and feels different, which is where NXT excels.

### Shayna Baszler vs. Dakota Kai

This is both of their NXT in-ring debuts. Before the match we see a clip of Baszler randomly attacking Performance Center trainees for fun because that's the kind of villain she is. Baszler drives her into the corner to start and takes Kai down into an armbar. A stomp bends Kai's arm at a NASTY angle and that's a referee stoppage at 1:23. Total squash and Baszler looked awesome here.

Post match Baszler stays on her until Ember Moon makes the save.

The Authors of Pain are ready to take care of the Street Profits. Since when can the Authors speak English?

General Manager William Regal talks to Baszler, saying that's not going to get her a title shot. Baszler: "We done here?"

### Kassius Ohno vs. Raul Mendoza

They even shake hands to start in a really old school move. Ohno grabs some rollups for a few early near falls but Mendoza is too fast. Mendoza hurricanranas him into a side roll but gets his head elbowed off without too much effort. An inverted Gory Special has Mendoza in more trouble until he reverses into a victory roll.

Back up and Ohno charges into a forearm in the corner, followed by a springboard spinning armdrag to drop Kassius again. Mendoza is showing off some very nice high flying here, which is exactly what he should be doing in a match like this. Ohno shrugs him off though and the High Tension Elbow Strike (running jumping elbow to the back of the head) ends Mendoza at 4:26.

**Rating:** C. This is the kind of thing that both guys needed. Ohno isn't exactly a star in NXT but he's great for a role like this: making people look good and using his experience to put together some better matches. Mendoza on the other hand is a rather good high flier and can showcase himself well around here. Mentioning that he's been in so many matches against top quality talent shows that they're likely to give him a win soon, which could lead somewhere for him.

Zelina Vega held a mini press conference saying she and Andrade Cien Almas aren't worried about Johnny Gargano after beating him twice. That's a fairy tale and Almas is reality. Vega is amazing at this condescending heel stuff and she's made Almas that much better.

Johnny Gargano is thrilled to be #1 contender but here's Velveteen Dream to interrupt. Dream wants a thank you for allowing Gargano to get his spot in the competition because Dream would have won it with ease.

Gargano needs to thank him because Dream deserves his spot.

The Street Profits loudly come into Regal's office and think they deserve a Tag Team Title shot. Regal seems to agree so next week it's the Street Profits vs. the Authors of Pain in a #1 contenders match. More loudness ensues and Regal smiles.

### Lio Rush vs. Lars Sullivan

This could hurt a lot. Rush dodges to start and even slaps Lars in the face. A kick to the jaw staggers Sullivan for a bit but he pulls Rush into the ropes to take over. Rush gets whipped hard into the corner but Lars misses a charge. That's about it for Rush though as one heck of a clothesline turns him inside out, followed by the Freak Accident for the pin at 1:54.

Post match Sullivan talks about destroying everyone until he ran into a different kind of force. That was Killian Dain and Sullivan wants to see him again. For now though, Rush takes a super Freak Accident to really hammer home the punishment.

The Undisputed Era has attacked Sanity in the back. The Era says that's it for the title shot.

Here's the Undisputed Era in the arena for a chat. Cole thinks they're missing something and Kyle asks where Sanity is. Maybe they forgot about their title shot tonight. Cole says they kicked the chaos out of Sanity but here's a livid Nikki Cross trying to get at the Era. Referees hold her back but so Regal comes out to cut the Era off again. The boss says the titles are on the line tonight and here's Roderick Strong to say he'll fight right now. Strong offers to go find a partner but someone interrupts to say he'll do it.

### Tag Team Titles: Undisputed Era vs. Roderick Strong/Aleister Black

The teams are at different corners than the usual WWE formula with the champs on the left side closer to the hard camera. I don't remember the last time I've seen the corners changed in WWE. Fish and O'Reilly are defending and get cleared to the floor, sending us to a break before the

bell.

Back with the bell ringing and Black kicking away at both champs. A knee to Kyle's head gets two and Strong adds a dive to the floor. Back in and Black's Oklahoma roll gets two on Kyle, followed by an armbar to keep him in trouble. Strong comes in for a chinlock as the champs are still looking for their first offense. Fish finally takes Black's knee out and we take a break.

Back with Kyle holding the knee and Fish adding a slingshot hilo for two. An exploder suplex gives Fish two but Black kicks O'Reilly away. There's the double tag to bring in Strong and Fish as everything breaks down. The champs' Ax and Smash is broken up with a jumping knee to the face and everyone is down. Cue Cole to go after Black, who stalks him into the crowd. Back inside, the champs go High/Low to retain at 11:50.

**Rating:** C+. This didn't feel like the standard NXT main event but maybe they're saving the Sanity match for another time. It was entertaining for what it was though and thankfully NXT is smart enough to not put the titles on a thrown together team like you would see so often on the main shows. Fine main event, but it felt more like a big time house show.

Post match Black comes in for the brawl but gets taken out. An AA onto an open chair knocks Black cold. The Era poses but here's Regal to talk about Philadelphia's extreme history. At Takeover: Philadelphia, Cole vs. Black will be an Extreme Rules match. Cole and Regal stare each other down to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C+. This show felt a little off from the norm for NXT but it still did everything it needed to do. The big story here was the arrival of Baszler (nailed it) and some more matches being teased for Takeover. NXT can fill in the gaps over the next few weeks and that's where they shine. Good enough show, but it didn't feel like it had the same flow that most of their episode do.

## Results

Shayna Baszler b. Dakota Kai via referee stoppage

Kassius Ohno b. Raul Mendoza – High Tension Elbow Strike

Lars Sullivan b. Lio Rush – Freak Accident

Undisputed Era b. Roderick Strong/Aleister Black – High/Low to Strong

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# **NXT – December 20, 2017: One Of The Best NXT's Ever**

## **NXT**

Date: December 20, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Percy Watson, Nigel McGuinness

It's a big night for NXT as we have a pair of title matches this week. Pete Dunne will be defending the UK Title against former champion Tyler Bate and Sanity defends the Tag Team Titles against the Undisputed Era. That's not bad for a one two punch (Bop and Bang perhaps?) so let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

### Tag Team Titles: Sanity vs. Undisputed Era

Eric Young/Killian Dain (defending) vs. Bobby Fish/Kyle O'Reilly here. Dain and Fish start things off with Bobby's sleeper doing as well as any sleeper works on a monster. The challengers bail to the floor as the fans are behind Sanity. A gutbuster drops Kyle and Young drops a middle rope elbow for two. Young gets in a shot to the head but Fish trips him up to send us to a break.

Back with Young in more trouble and getting suplexed into the corner. We hit the armbars for a bit until Young knees O'Reilly in the ribs. A neckbreaker gives us the double knockdown but Fish is smart enough to draw Dain in to prevent the hot tag. Young low bridges Kyle outside though and now the tag brings in Dain for the house cleaning.

Dain drops Kyle with a Michinoku Driver for two and it's already back to Young for a powerbomb. Cue Adam Cole to crotch Young though, drawing in Nikki Cross to dive onto Adam. Young gets two more off a neckbreaker to Kyle but Cole posts Dain. A suicide dive takes Cole down but Young walks into a High/Low for the pin and the titles at 14:58.

**Rating:** B. Sanity feels like transitional champions and that's ok. The Undisputed Era are the guys who will be getting the big matches and big title defenses, meaning whoever takes them down they will look like world beaters. It's an entertaining match with all four moving quite well, along with making Dain look like more of a monster as O'Reilly and Fish were running scared of him for a long chunk of the match.

Cole celebrates with the new champs, showing off near elation to really sell the moment.

Video on Roderick Strong before his Fatal Four Way Qualifying Match later.

Shayna Baszler is coming.

Heavy Machinery admires Tino Sabbatelli and Riddick Moss' car until the owners show up. Trash is talked but the rich guys drive away. I can

approve of more of Tino on TV.

We look back at Sonya Deville beating Ruby Riott a few weeks ago.

Sonya challenges Ember Moon for next week. The title match is confirmed.

Video on Lars Sullivan.

We look back at Aleister Black kicking Adam Cole's head off last week.

#### Fatal Four Way Qualifying Match: Roderick Strong vs. Lars Sullivan

Strong goes right at him to start but gets taken down with a hard shot to the face. The Angle Slam doesn't work either and Lars forearms him in the back. We hit the bearhug until Strong strikes his way to freedom. Some running forearms stagger the big man but he blasts Strong in the head. For some reason Lars goes up top but gets superplexed down for two with the near fall barely getting one. Some jumping knees give Strong two but a pop up powerslam cuts him off again. The Freak Accident sends Sullivan to the #1 contenders match at 5:43.

**Rating:** C+. They're pushing the heck out of Sullivan and that's exactly what they should be doing. The guy looks like a monster and he's being treated like one as well. If there's one thing NXT knows how to do (and there are more than one), it's make build up the next big thing in short order. Sullivan was barely a name months ago and now he's looking like the biggest monster around here since....Bray Wyatt maybe?

The Street Profits talked to some fans earlier this week. The fans seemed to like them.

The four way is next week with Aleister Black vs. Killian Dane vs. Johnny Gargano vs. Lars Sullivan.

Tyler Bate is ready to take his title back.

#### United Kingdom Title: Tyler Bate vs. Pete Dunne

Dunne is defending. The fans are split to start as Dunne takes Bate down into an armbar. Bate reverses into one of his own but has to jump out of a headscissors (with a wave to Dunne for a nice bonus). They fight over a

test of strength on the mat with Bate getting powered down but bridging out in an impressive power display. A left handed sucker punch drops Dunne for two but Pete gets in a hard forearm outside to take over.

Bate stomps Pete's hand into the steps, only to get suplexed off the steps for a cool visual. Back in and Dunne stomps on the hand to pop a finger out of joint. Tyler pops it back in so Pete stomps on it AGAIN like a true villain should. Back up and Tyler tells him to bring it before countering a kick into a t-bone suplex. A rolling kick to the head looks to set up the Tyler Driver 97 but Dunne reverses into a triangle.

Bate's powerbomb counter doesn't work so he picks Dunne up AGAIN, drapes him onto the middle rope and catapults him into the top for the break. Not bad at all. The airplane spin into the reverse airplane spin is followed by a THIRD spin but Bate's delayed cover only gets two. Dunne crawls over to the ropes so Bate climbs the ropes for another superplex and two more. They trade hard kicks with Bate getting the better of it as Dunne looks out. Dunne grabs the arm for a quick Bitter End but Bate is up again.

They trade clotheslines before heading to the apron to slug it out again. Back in and Dunne punches him in the face and gets two off an X-Plex into a sitout powerbomb. Bate knocks him outside for a big dive, followed by the Tyler Driver 97 for an even closer near fall. Back up and Bate tried a German superplex but Dunne lands on his feet, setting up the Bitter End to retain the title at 22:54.

**Rating:** A-. I was thinking this would be a downgrade from their previous match and while that was the case, it was still one heck of a slugout with both guys hitting each other as hard as they can. There's a poise between these two and it makes for some outstanding matches. They need to find Dunne some new challengers now as you don't want to burn the fans out on something like this, no matter how good the matches are.

We're off the air thirteen minutes after the hour. That might be the third or fourth time that this show has ever run long.

**Overall Rating:** A+. And that's why NXT is the best wrestling TV show in years. In an hour and fifteen minutes we had an instant classic, a #1

contenders qualifying match and a title change. That's some of the tightest TV you'll see anywhere and it was outstanding stuff. The build to Takeover should start soon and that could be an incredible show given where some of the pieces seem to be setting up. Incredible TV here and one of the best NXT's ever.

### Results

Undisputed Era b. Sanity – High/Low to Young

Lars Sullivan b. Roderick Strong – Freak Accident

Pete Dunne b. Tyler Bate – Bitter End

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# Takeover – WarGames: I Need A Minute

**Takeover: WarGames**

Date: November 19, 2017

Location: Toyota Center, Houston, Texas

Commentators: Percy Watson, Nigel McGuinness, Mauro Ranallo

It's time! After nearly twenty years of waiting, we're FINALLY back to the biggest gimmick of them all. Well at least to the WWE version of the thing. Tonight there will be three trios involved in the match, which could make for a rather interesting edition of WarGames. At least it's here though. Let's get to it.

The opening video of course has a war theme, with clips of President Roosevelt declaring a state of war, peppered with clips from the build to tonight's show. The rest of the card is thrown in at the end, which is how it should go.

The two ring structure is so odd to see in WWE>

#### Kassius Ohno vs. Lars Sullivan

Sullivan is an unstoppable monster who needs better competition. Ohno gets driven into the corner without much effort to start and a forearm to the jaw has no effect on Lars. They head outside with Ohno being dropped face first onto the apron, only to have Sullivan charge into a boot in the corner. An enziguri staggers the monster but a clothesline turns Ohno inside out. A pop up powerslam plants Ohno and Mauro is freaking out at the power display (fair enough).

Back up and Ohno slugs away with some solid success, including a flying forearm to the back of the head. The cyclone kick actually drops Sullivan for two (which was necessary to make the fans believe this could happen). Ohno STOMPS HIM IN THE HEAD over and over and drops a backsplash for one. Some discus elbows don't have much effort though and it's the Freak Accident for the pin on Ohno at 5:35.

**Rating:** C. Not a great match but EXACTLY how it should have been booked. Sullivan looked like he was in some trouble but then barreled his way through Ohno for the win. That's all this should have been as Ohno is basically just a fresh meal for Sullivan, who has some serious potential. Well booked match here.

Some of the UK wrestlers are here.

We recap Aleister Black vs. Velveteen Dream. Black was ready to make an announcement but Dream interrupted him, saying that everything that fades to black will one day come to light, like the light of the Velveteen Dream. Black wouldn't acknowledge Dream, which has Dream obsessed with getting Black to say his name.

### Aleister Black vs. Velveteen Dream

Black does his still awesome rising up entrance. Dream debuts some custom made tights with himself on one leg and Black on the other ala Rick Rude back in the day. The fans are rather pleased with Dream, even as he slaps Black in the face. They hit the mat to start with Black working on an armbar before grabbing something like an Octopus hold. Dream slips out and actually tries to turn it into a striking match, earning himself a trip to the floor.

That allows Black to backflip into his sitting pose, right in front of Dream. A hip swivel doesn't seem to get on Black's nerves, but he does look away a bit. Dream sits down as well as the fans chant SAY HIS NAME. Black crawls forward like Dream did a few weeks back, freaking Dream out for a change. Dream actually snaps his throat across the ropes to send Black outside, meaning it's time for more posing.

Back in and Dream gets two off a good looking superkick before we hit a reverse chinlock (Dream: "SAY IT! SAY IT!"). Black gets tied up in the ropes as the fans really want him to say it. Dream slaps him though and that's just not a good idea. Black speeds things up with some strikes and a springboard moonsault press for two (SWEET, according to the annoying fans).

A quick Death Valley Driver gives Dream two so he tries a super version, only to get kicked down. Black knees him in the face for a close two, only to get caught in a Sister Abigail into a DDT for a delayed two. The Purple Rainmaker lands on a raised boot though, sending Dream into the ropes. Black kicks him in the face but walks into a superkick. That's enough for Black though and it's Black Mass for the pin at 14:41.

**Rating:** B+. Who knew Dream had that in him? This was all about the mind games at first but at the end of the day, you (mostly) knew it was going

to be Black Mass wrapping this up. Black seems ready to become a huge deal around here and Dream...I'm not sure where he goes from here actually. Really good match though.

Post match Black takes the mic and says "enjoy infamy...Velveteen Dream." I'm not sure what to make of that. Sign of respect maybe?

Asuka, Funaki and Finn Balor are here. What a random trio.

We recap the Women's Title match. Asuka had to vacate the Women's Title upon moving up to the main roster so it's time for a four way to crown a new champion. Kairi Sane won the Mae Young Classic and the other three won qualifying matches.

Women's Title: Kairi Sane vs. Peyton Royce vs. Nikki Cross vs. Ember Moon

The title is vacant coming in and it's one fall to a finish. It's a brawl to start with everyone fighting everyone at once. They head outside with Sane diving onto Royce, only to have Moon dive onto both of them. Naturally Cross is right there but Moon powerbombs her on the floor (THUD).

Back in and Kairi hits a running spear in the corner on Moon but Royce is back in with a half nelson over the ropes, using her leg instead of the arm. Back up and another spear cuts Royce down, sending Sane up top rather early. Moon is right up there but Royce makes the save with a Tower of Doom for a huge crash. Cross is back in though and dives onto all three at once. Sane gets caught in the Tree of Woe for some stomping but Royce makes the save for some reason.

Cross' fisherman's neckbreaker gets two on Sane with Moon making a diving save. Royce is back up with a fisherman's suplex for the same on Cross as Sane makes the save. Sane piles up Royce and Cross for a double Insane Elbow. This time it's Sane making the save but Moon sends her outside. That sends Moon up top for the Eclipse to Royce and Cross at the same time for the pin and the title at 10:09.

**Rating:** B-. Good match but rather shorter than I was expecting. Moon was my pick to win and she makes sense after getting so close, though having

her lose over and over to Asuka and then win the title without Asuka around doesn't look great. At least there are some solid challengers to come after her in the near future though, which is a great sign.

Asuka presents Moon with the title.

Takeover: Philadelphia is on January 27.

Kevin Owens and Samoa Joe are here.

We recap the NXT Title match. Drew McIntyre won the title back in August and didn't really have a major feud. Enter Andrade Cien Almas, who has recently been recharged by new manager Zelina Vega. Drew said come get a shot so here we are.

#### NXT Title: Drew McIntyre vs. Andrade Cien Almas

Drew is defending and again towers over Almas. Andrade wastes no time in sending him outside for a hurricanrana attempt from Vega...who is calmly planted back on the apron. Drew knocks a dive out of the air but gets his throat snapped back across the top rope. We hit a triangle choke over the ropes into a Fujiwara armbar as Almas has an early target. A snap belly to belly gives Drew a breather though and a top rope clothesline sends the champ into a nipup.

Drew misses a charge in the corner though and gets caught in a reverse tornado DDT for two. A reverse hurricanrana is countered into a reverse Alabama Slam but Almas avoids another charge to send him outside. With Vega screeching, Almas scores with a moonsault press to the floor for a very close two back inside. Almas catches him in the Tree of Woe for the top rope double stomp, followed by the running knees in the corner for two.

Drew has had enough of this getting beaten up thing and comes back with a hard Batista Bomb for a near fall of his own as they're both a bit spent. Future Shock out of nowhere gets two more but Almas sends him hard into the corner for another double knees to the back. Almas heads outside and grabs the title, allowing Vega to score with a hurricanrana driver.

The hammerlock DDT gives Almas a crazy close two and the crowd is losing

it. Back up and a Claymore out of nowhere gets two with Vega putting the boot on the ropes. Another Claymore hits ropes though and Drew is in trouble. He heads up top for some reason but gets caught in an inverted draping DDT to give Almas the title in a big upset at 14:43.

**Rating:** B+. Well I'm surprised. This felt like a pit stop on the way to McIntyre vs. Adam Cole in Philadelphia but sweet goodness that was a shock. There's a good chance that this is pretty much it for Drew in NXT as there's just no reason to keep him toiling down there when he was ready for the main roster the day he debuted. Really good match here too with an even better ending.

Drew is dejected and Almas holds up the title on the announcers' table.

Long recap of the main event. Undisputed Era showed up a few months ago and started attacking everyone on the roster, including Sanity. They tried to get Roderick Strong to join them but Strong wasn't interested. The Authors of Pain had a rematch for the NXT Tag Team Titles but the Undisputed Era interfered. Therefore, Strong joined forces with the Authors to make it a three way feud.

There are some different rules than in regular WarGames matches. Three men will start with their partners in individual shark cages. After five minutes, one team will be allowed to send in its remaining two members. Then, after three minutes each, the other two teams will be added in as well. It will be the first pinfall or submission to win and if you leave the cage, you forfeit the match.

Dustin Rhodes and Arn Anderson are here.

### Sanity vs. Undisputed Era vs. Authors of Pain/Roderick Strong

There's no roof on the cage. Strong has an Authors of Pain outfit this time, which doesn't quite suit him. Eric Young, Adam Cole and Strong start things off and this is SO strange to see in WWE. Cole tries to bail to start but they all wind up in the same cage. Young sends Cole into the cage and it's a double team to keep Cole in early trouble. He's able to crotch both of them on top though and everyone is down.

Back up and Strong starts slugging away, sending everyone into a cage until Kyle O'Reilly and Bobby Fish are the first team in. Strong and Young are in very sudden trouble thanks to a series of strikes from the fresh team. Fish and O'Reilly send both of them against the cage and crash into them over and over as this is one sided at the moment. That sounds like time for a fresh team, which in this case is the Authors of Pain. Undisputed Era can't hold the door closed and the destruction is on in a hurry.

Everyone is sent into another ring with the Authors LAUNCHING Strong onto the pile for a big old crash. Young and O'Reilly are caught in the Tree of Woe, leaving the Authors to give Cole and Fish Death Valley Drivers to untie them. The clock counts down and it's Alexander Wolfe and Killian Dain completing the field. Wolfe is smart enough to bring in a nightstick to beat down the Authors while Dain throws in some weapons. As Sanity cleans house, the fans want tables so Dain, who hasn't gotten in yet, pulls one out. Dain finally gets in and locks the cage...before eating the key.

Dain beats on the Authors in the corner, including a shotgun dropkick with a backslash. That's not enough so Dain climbs the cage for a huge crossbody and a near fall on Strong. Cole swings a cane at Dain with Fish coming in for a failed save attempt. Dain picks up O'Reilly and Fish for a fall away slam/Samoan drop combination while Razar does the same thing in the other ring. The slugout it until Dain crossbodies him down. Akum comes back in with a powerslam to Dain but O'Reilly walks the cage for a tornado DDT.

Strong gets caught in Chasing the Dragon for no cover. Instead Fish and O'Reilly clean house with a bunch of kicks before Kyle ties Wolfe up with a chain. Using said chain, O'Reilly puts on a cross armbreaker with Young making a fast save via a top rope elbow. Fish is back up with a moonsault and everyone is down at once. The Authors are back up with a Super Collide as Dain is a little busted open.

Young is back up with a Death Valley Driver to send Akum into Razar for two more. Strong pops up with the backbreakers and an Olympic Slam on Dain for the same. Everyone heads into the corners of the different

rings, meaning stereo Towers of Doom. Cole managed to stay on the ropes though, meaning he's the only one not destroyed at the moment. Smart man Cole. The Authors crotch him on the top though...and grab the tables. Wolfe is up though and for some reason saves Cole, who climbs up to the top of the cage.

Akum gets German superplex through the tables and Young neckbreakers Razar off the top. With Cole still on top, Dain cleans house and grabs a trashcan....FOR A COAST TO COAST ON O'REILLY!!! Ok so it was more like Coast to the Ohio Valley but not bad! Cole stands up on top of the cage but Strong is looking up at him. Strong climbs up as well (Fans: "PLEASE DON'T DIE!")....for a superplex onto the pile!

Strong covers Cole for two as we see Wolfe still down with a referee checking on him after the German superplex, which was nearly five minutes ago. Razar and Dain slug it out between the rings until Akum comes in for the Last Chapter out of nowhere. Something like Total Elimination drops Akum but Sanity takes out O'Reilly and Fish. Strong gets wheelbarrow suplexed into the cage but Cole knees a chair into Young's face for the pin at 35:54.

**Rating:** A. Oh yeah it still works. This felt like the war it was supposed to be and that's exactly what they were shooting for. Throw in Dain and Cole looking like killers and the Undisputed Era looking like stars, especially as we're coming up on what will probably be their crowning night in Philadelphia. It says a lot when I'm actually tired after watching a match but that's what happened here. Definitely check this one out as it more than lives up to the WarGames reputation.

**Overall Rating:** A. Well that was amazing. With the main event being outstanding and two other matches rocking as hard as they did, it's about as good as you're going to get. The worst match was a perfectly acceptable (and short) match with the perfect booking. Aside from that, this is good to excellent the rest of the way

## Results

Lars Sullivan b. Kassius Ohno – Freak Accident

Aleister Black b. Velveteen Dream – Black Mass

Ember Moon b. Kairi Sane, Peyton Royce and Nikki Cross – Eclipse to Cross

Andrade Cien Almas b. Drew McIntyre – Hanging inverted DDT

Undisputed Era b. Sanity and Authors of Pain/Roderick Strong – Running knee into a chair to Young

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