

New Column: In Other News – Wrestling Weekend Edition

I think this qualifies as a busy weekend.

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Takeover 36: One More Time

Takeover 36

Date: August 22, 2021

Location: Capitol Wrestling Center, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Beth Phoenix, Vic Joseph, Wade Barrett

This might be the last version of the classic Takeover that we see and that is rather saddening. Takeover has been so special for such a long time but things in NXT are going to be shaken up in the near future. If this is it, they're going out with a pretty big card, with three matches you could call the main event. Let's get to it.

Kickoff Show: Ridge Holland vs. Trey Baxter

Pete Dunne is here with Holland. Baxter charges straight at him to start and gets tossed with a suplex. Holland drops a knee and hits him in the face but Baxter is back up with a running knee to the face. A Tajiri handspring elbow is countered with a headbutt to the back of the head though and Northern Grit finishes for Holland at 1:45. That's all it should have been.

Post match Holland says that is a direct look into Timothy Thatcher's future.

The opening video has a physics theme of all things, with each match being tied into a law of physics (every action has an equal but opposite reaction, an object in motion tends to stay in motion etc), all capped off with the theory of chaos in Karrion Kross. I kind of like that.

Million Dollar Title: Cameron Grimes vs. LA Knight

Grimes is challenging and has Ted DiBiase in his corner. If Knight wins, DiBiase is his butler. Knight isn't happy with the fans being behind Grimes so he takes him into the corner for some right hands. Grimes knocks him to the floor and hits the kick to the chest, much to DiBiase's delight. A running boot to the face, with an assist from DiBiase, drops Knight again and there's a big boot on the apron. Knight catches him on top though and it's a catapult to send Grimes throat first into the rope.

A running crossbody gives Grimes two and he blocks the jumping neckbreaker out of the corner. Knight is right back with a powerbomb out of the corner for two of his own as things slow back down. The neck crank goes on for a bit, followed by a slam to take Grimes back down. That earns a YOU STILL SUCK chant for Knight, who misses an elbow (Maybe because he sucks? I mean he doesn't, but that's what the crowd told me.). Knight busts out a top rope springboard moonsault of all things but crash lands, allowing Grimes to hit the running boot in the corner.

A German suplex sets up a hurricanrana for two but Knight kicks the leg out to cut things off. Knight goes very big with a Burning Hammer, but since it's an NXT opener, it's good for two. Blunt Force Trauma is broken up and they trade shots to the face until Grimes' flipping powerslam gets two more. Knight catches him on top and runs the corner for a German

superplex with Grimes flipping back onto his face. Grimes' nose is busted but Blunt Force Trauma is countered into the Million Dollar Dream.

Knight climbs the corner to flip backwards for two but Grimes holds on (that's a new one). Instead Knight sends him face first into the buckle for the break and it's time to grab the title. That takes a bit too long though and Knight kicks him in the head. Grimes picks up the title and DiBiase puts the Million Dollar Dream on Knight for a pretty cool moment. The Cave In finishes Knight to give Grimes the title at 16:43.

Rating: B-. This was all about the moment but there wasn't a great crowd reaction for the title change. The lack of a Full Sail crowd has been a factor in NXT's downward trend and it was on display here. The match itself was good and had Grimes fighting from underneath at times, but it went on longer than it needed to and I was waiting for it to be over at times.

We recap Dakota Kai vs. Raquel Gonzalez for Gonzalez's Women's Title. Gonzalez won the title at Takeover Stand & Deliver and Kai isn't happy that the woman she brought in got the title first. Gonzalez doesn't like being called a sidekick and didn't like Kai turning on her, setting up the showdown for the title.

Women's Title: Dakota Kai vs. Raquel Gonzalez

Gonzalez is defending. Kai goes after her to start but gets smart by holding onto the ropes to avoid a big boot. The threat of a lariat sends Kai outside but she comes back in to grab a cross armbreaker. That's broken up as well so Gonzalez tries a powerbomb, which is broken up with a scorpion kick. Another attempt at a big boot sends Kai outside but it's a Samoa drop to crush her back inside.

Kai gets dropped onto the top turnbuckle but Gonzalez seems to be favoring her arm. There's a toss out of the corner to send Kai flying as this is one sided so far. Kan catches her in the

corner though and a heck of a running boot to the face sends Gonzalez outside. It takes enough time to get Gonzalez back inside that it's a rather delayed two and Kai is frustrated. A Codebreaker with Gonzalez hanging in the ropes gets two more but she is back up with a shot to the face.

Kai gets put on Gonzalez's shoulder and tossed down onto her face, setting up the twisting Vader Bomb for two. The lifting powerbomb is countered into a triangle choke but Gonzalez swings her into the corner for the violent break. Kai tries a scorpion kick but Gonzalez countered into a heck of a sitout powerbomb. Back up and Gonzalez loads her up for a powerbomb and then drops Kai ribs first onto the top.

Kai is fine enough to hit a superkick into the Kairopractor for another near fall. Gonzalez's lifting powerbomb is countered as well and the top rope double stomp connect for Kai (though Gonzalez barely moves). Back up and Gonzalez takes her to the corner for a superplex but Kai slips through the legs. Another kick staggers Gonzalez but Kai's running big boot is countered into the super lifting powerbomb to retain the title at 12:23.

Rating: C+. This didn't have the most drama, but it was all about Gonzalez finally reeling Kai in and powerbombing her halfway through the ring. That worked very well and Kai got in enough offense to make you believe an upset might possibly happen. Eventually it didn't work though and we got to the result we should have reached. Kai might be main roster bound, as she is the kind of person who would fit in well up there.

Post match Gonzalez celebrates but Kay Lee Ray comes out for the big staredown. Makes sense as there is nothing left for Ray to do in NXT UK.

We recap Ilja Dragunov vs. Walter. They had probably the Match of the Year in 2020 and it has reached a nearly mythical status. Dragunov has been haunted by the loss but has grown

mentally and is ready for one more shot at Walter and the title. Walter is ready to destroy him once and for all and they are in for the big showdown.

United Kingdom Title: Walter vs. Ilja Dragunov

Walter is defending. They start a bit slowly until Dragunov takes him up against the rope for the chops. Walter isn't happy and chases him into the corner but Dragunov ducks away again to increase the frustration. They go to the mat with Walter taking over off the power. Back up and Dragunov hits a running shoulder, followed by something like a World's Strongest Slam to pull Walter out of the air. Another headlock takeover puts Walter down and Dragunov rips the bandage off his own stitched head.

Back up and Dragunov forearms away before catching Walter's chop. Dragunov starts cranking on the arm until Walter lifts him up onto the top. The BIG chop finally connects to put Dragunov on the floor and the apron powerbomb puts Dragunov in real trouble for the first time. Back in and Walter sends him flying with a suplex, setting up the Boston crab. Walter switches into an STF and then something like a bully choke. That's broken up so they chop it out until a sleeper from Walter.

Dragunov slips out and manages a backdrop, followed by the running clotheslines. The Constantine Special is countered into a swinging Rock Bottom to give Walter two. Another big chop drops Dragunov and the referee has to check on him. The big boot rocks Dragunov again but he manages to get back up for the slugout. Knees to the chest and backfists to the head rock Walter but he manages to lift him up into a fireman's carry. That's broken up as well and Dragunov knees him in the head.

Dragunov tries something but Walter knocks him out of the air and scores with the lariat for two. Back up again and Walter's

chop to the back makes me cringe. It fires Dragunov to his feet though and a clothesline drops Walter. The German suplex puts Walter down again but he's back up with a chop to Dragunov's destroyed chest. A kick to the head staggers Walter and something like a t-bone suplex gets two. Dragunov goes up and Walter begs off, but Dragunov shakes his head no and hits a top rope seated dropkick.

The backsplash sets up Torpedo Moscow but Walter reverses into a sleeper and a sleeper suplex drops Dragunov onto his head. He's right back up with Torpedo Moscow to the back of the head and they're both down. Torpedo Moscow connects again for two and they chop it out. A chop to the leg staggers Walter, who is back up with a big chop for two. Walter goes up and gets superplexed back down, setting up a missile dropkick to leave them both down again.

Walter hits his own dropkick into the powerbomb and the stacked up cover gets two. Another chop off goes to Walter, who smashes him with a running knee. Another powerbomb sets up the top rope splash for the next near fall and they're both down again. Walter's sleeper is countered again so he kicks Dragunov in the face. Dragunov staggers to the corner and hits a middle rope headbutt to drop Walter.

The hard elbows to the back of the head set up a sleeper on Walter, who climbs to the middle rope and...well they kind of fall backwards for the break. Dragunov elbows away even more and grabs another sleeper as Walter can't get rid of him. Walter dropping back can't break the hold and he's in trouble. The hold is broken but Dragunov hammers away at the back and grabs another sleeper for the tap and the title at 22:08.

Rating: A. This was about two things. First of all, they beat the heck out of each other and you could feel the physicality. That's what the match was built up as being, but it also told an amazing story. The idea of the match was that Dragunov would not give up and was not going to stop. Ultimately he

wanted it more than Walter and survived until the end, which is how this story should have gone. Excellent match and I loved every bit of it. I have no idea what is next for Walter, but hopefully it is a lot of ice.

Cameron Grimes is very happy with the win and Ted DiBiase comes up to congratulate him. DiBiase even throws in some money for Grimes and McKenzie Mitchell, but Grimes is ready for the Million Dollar Celebration on NXT.

William Regal talks to Samoa Joe about how he has to stay unbiased. On a personal level though, he wants Joe to kick Karrion Cross' a**.

We recap Adam Cole vs. Kyle O'Reilly. They've fought before, they hate each other, it's 2/3 falls tonight, with a regular match, a street fight and a cage match if necessary. This is billed as the Undisputed Finale and they're ready to destroy each other.

Kyle O'Reilly vs. Adam Cole

2/3 falls and the first fall is a traditional match. They trade kicks to the head to start and Cole kicks him outside. Cole loads up the steps but gets pulled into a suplex instead. Back in and O'Reilly grabs an ankle lock but Cole slips out and hits a running knee to the face. Cole kicks him down again and loads up the Panama Sunrise, only to have O'Reilly counter into a cradle for the first fall at 3:25.

The second fall is a street fight so O'Reilly knocks him outside and sits Cole in a chair. The trashcan goes over Cole's head and O'Reilly kicks him down to knock Cole silly. Back in and Cole superkicks him off the top, leaving O'Reilly on the floor holding his ribs. Cole sends him ribs first into the announcers' table and it's another kick to the head back inside. O'Reilly blocks a whip out of the corner but a knee to the ribs breaks that up.

The whip into the corner sends O'Reilly sliding ribs first into the post and it's time for the kendo sticks to the ribs. Cole goes Pittsburgh with the Lockjaw, setting up some elbows to the head. O'Reilly fights up for the slugout and snaps off a German suplex. A shinbreaker onto the chair sets up a charge into the corner...which hits the chair wedged into the ropes. They trade pump kicks for the double knockdown, with the referee not counting Cole down despite O'Reilly's leg being over him.

Both of them roll to the floor and wrap chains around their fists for the slugout. That doesn't work (because hitting each other in the head with chain wrapped fists doesn't put someone down) so they head outside with O'Reilly winning the slugout. Back in and a pair of chairs are sat next to each other. O'Reilly takes too long going up top though and gets slammed down onto the open chairs (EGADS). The Last Shot gives Cole the second fall at 16:55 total.

The cage is lowered but some medics come out to check on O'Reilly. That's not cool with Cole, who takes him outside for a powerbomb onto the announcers' table. The third fall finally begins after some replays as the cage is set up, meaning Cole can kick him in the head. O'Reilly is back with a bunch of whips into the cage but the top rope knee misses.

Instead Cole knees him in the head for two and hits a low blow to cut O'Reilly off again. Cole teases climbing out but stops for a Panama Sunrise and a near fall instead. With nothing else working, Cole handcuffs O'Reilly to the ropes...but gets pulled into a heel hook for the tap to give O'Reilly the win at 25:41.

Rating: B. I'm stunned at the length but that's an upgrade as their matches have been notorious for taking far too long. Cutting it down gave us a rather good fight with the first fall showing O'Reilly can outsmart Cole and the second showing that neither know how to react to being hit in the head with a

chain. It was good, but it never hit that next level, which I think I'll take in exchange for the unnecessary twenty extra minutes.

The fans boo the heck out of the ending. Maybe they were expecting more or maybe they didn't like Cole tapping when the kendo stick was easily within reach. Or they don't want Cole going to AEW.

Ilja Dragunov says the Ring General is dead. Long live the Czar. Dragunov's chest looks absolutely horrible here and made me cringe a bit at the thought of what that must feel like.

Legado del Fantasma is ready to end Hit Row on Tuesday.

We recap Samoa Joe vs. Karrion Kross for the NXT Title. Kross has dominated NXT as champion while also causing all kinds of chaos. Joe has resigned as General Manager William Regal's troubleshooter to get his shot at Kross and it's time for a showdown. Kross says Joe can't stop him but Joe isn't so sure.

NXT Title: Karrion Kross vs. Samoa Joe

Kross is defending and we get the Big Match Intros, complete with WE WANT SCARLETT chants. Joe knocks him into the corner to start and hits the enziguri while the fans chant for Jeff Hardy. The chop to the back sets up the backsplash but the Koquina Clutch is broken up. The Doomsday Saito sets up the running forearm to the back of the head to send Joe outside.

Back in and Kross hits him in the head again, setting up the ankle lock. That's rolled through to the floor, with Joe hitting the suicide dive. Back in and Joe is sent into the corner, where the Rock Bottom is countered into an armdrag. The powerslam almost drops Kross on his head for two, setting up the powerbomb into the STF into the Crossface.

Kross gets to the rope and scores with a knee to the face for two. An overhead belly to belly sends Joe flying but he is

right back with the Koquina Clutch. That is countered into the Krossjacket Choke but Joe slips out again and hits the release Rock Bottom. The MuscleBuster gives Joe the pin and the title (for a record third time) at 12:24.

Rating: B-. As expected, this was pretty good and mostly fine. It does feel a bit weird to have Kross drop the title clean, but after he had his legs cut out from under him on Raw, they didn't have much of a choice. The Scarlett/Hardy chants at the start told you all you needed to know about his future and this is about all they could do. Let Joe drop the title to whoever wins the Breakout Tournament or someone new and usher in the new era.

Joe poses to end the show.

Overall Rating: A-. If that's it for this version of Takeover, they went out with another great one. There was nothing bad on the show and the Walter vs. Dragunov was the classic that the show needed. Cole vs. O'Reilly was a heck of a fight, Grimes vs. Knight gave us the long awaited Grimes victory and the other two matches were good enough. This was an awesome show and as nervous as I am about the new NXT, it was nice to have one more amazing Takeover.

Results

Cameron Grimes b. LA Knight – Cave In

Raquel Gonzalez b. Dakota Kai – Super lifting powerbomb

Ilja Dragunov b. Walter – Sleeper

Kyle O'Reilly b. Adam Cole two falls to one

Samoa Joe b. Karrion Kross – MuscleBuster

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