

Takeover: Portland: The Untouchable One



IMG Credit: WWE

Takeover: Portland

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Location: Moda Center, Portland, Oregon

Commentators: Beth Phoenix, Nigel McGuinness, Mauro Ranallo

We're back with the big show and making the Sunday debut, which hopefully isn't a trend. This is the first Takeover since November and it's going to be an interesting one since we are only about six weeks away from the next one. As usual they've done a good job with building the card so let's get to it.

Poppy performs the theme song live.

North American Title: Keith Lee vs. Dominick Dijakovic

Lee is defending. They stare each other down to start and neither can get anywhere off a headlock. Lee goes with a hurricanrana to pop the crowd for the first time and shrugs off some shoulders for a bonus. The cyclone boot works a bit better and puts Lee on the floor, setting up the Fosbury Flop, which Lee catches in a powerbomb. That's escaped as well and Dijakovic suplexes him onto the apron.

Back in and Dijakovic talks trash and slowly pounds Lee down but Lee

blocks a suplex. Instead it's a release German suplex to drop Dijakovic on his face but Dijakovic is back with another cyclone book. A corkscrew moonsault gives Dijakovic two and it's time to strike it out again. An exchange of standing clotheslines puts them both on their knees and neither can get up. Lee is on his feet first and heads up top but Dijakovic is right there with him with a super spinning Samoan drop for two. That looked awesome, though it wasn't the top rope Feast Your Eyes that commentary called it.

Lee is back up with a Pounce into the corner and it's time to head outside. Dijakovic gets knocked into a chair and Lee chops him rather hard but Dijakovic puts him in the chair for a superkick. It's time to show off again though as Dijakovic hits a springboard flip dive onto Lee in the chair and they head back inside. Back in and the Big Bang Catastrophe is countered, as is the sitout chokeslam.

Instead Lee hits the Spirit Bomb...and Dijakovic pops up to his feet. Another Spirit Bomb gets two and Lee almost looks sad. Lee goes up top but Dijakovic shoves him out to the floor in a crash. Dijakovic pulls him back up for a super Spanish Fly but the back gives out on the Feast Your Eyes attempt. The Big Bang Catastrophe connects to retain Lee's title at 20:17.

Rating: A-. This is the definition of spectacle, as the match was built around the idea of one huge spot after another until one of them couldn't get up anymore. That's always incredible to watch and neither comes out looking anything close to bad. It was an awesome match and somehow not even their best one ever. It's going to take someone special to take the title off of Lee and that's a great situation to be in.

Lee helps him up post match, as he should.

We recap Dakota Kai vs. Tegan Nox. They were best friends and went through everything, including knee rehab together. Then Kai didn't make it onto the WarGames team but was added as a replacement. Therefore, she turned on Nox and went after her bad knee in a rather evil moment. Tonight it's a street fight.

Dakota Kai vs. Tegan Nox

Street fight. Kai jumps her during the entrances and they fight through the barricade with Kai hitting a DDT on the floor. They head inside for the opening bell and a two count on Nox, meaning it's time to bring in the weapons. Nox hits a crossbody off the steps to knock the cricket bat away from Kai and adds a Cannonball against the steps. A table is pulled out but Kai cuts her off with a kick to the face.

Nox is back with a trashcan though, including a nasty German suplex to put Kai onto the can for two. The Kaiopractor gives Kai her own two but Nox sends her face first into the apron. They go to the top with Nox chokeslamming her down and busting out a Molly Go Round for two. Nox puts Kai's head in a chair and loads up a Punt of all things but Kai slips away and throws the chair at her to send Nox outside.

Kai tries to duct tape her to the rope but Nox is back out again and hits her in the knee with a laptop. It's time for...chains of all things with Nox hitting her in the knee with the steel. The chair is wrapped around the knee for a stomp and the Shiniest Wizard connects. Nox brings the table in instead and wraps the chair around Kai's neck. It's time to go up but here's Raquel Gonzales (Reina Gonzales) to make the save and throw Nox onto (not through) the table. Kai pins what's left of Nox at 13:40.

Rating: B. They made the right call with Kai winning here as there was nothing to be gained with Nox winning. Gonzales being the big surprise is a different way to go and it keeps Nox looking like the great sympathetic face that she is. You can imagine that this isn't done yet, or at least Nox isn't done with trying to get revenge.

Gonzales helps Kai up and Kai isn't sure what is going on.

We recap Finn Balor vs. Johnny Gargano. It's a battle of old vs. new as Balor is one of the legends around here and Gargano has taken up the NXT mantle in his absence, leading NXT to new heights. Balor doesn't like what NXT has become and is back to show that he's still the best while also taking out Gargano late last year in the process.

Finn Balor vs. Johnny Gargano

They go technical to start with Balor not being able to take over on the

arm and getting rolled up for two instead. Balor takes him down with a headscissors and even does some pushups at the same time for a bonus. Gargano fights out and gets a headlock on the mat before kicking Balor in the chest. The rolling kick to the head stuns Balor again but he's back up with a whip into the corner for some running chops.

Balor goes to the apron but Gargano follows him out and hits a spear to knock them outside. Gargano loads up a running dropkick, only to have Balor Sling Blade him down. Back in and Balor grabs an armbar while rubbing his forearm over Gargano's face. The chinlock/armbar stays on until Gargano fights up and pulls Balor down by the arm. Gargano goes to the apron but gets his leg snapped over the top rope.

Balor works on the leg and stomps on it in the corner, followed by the cannonballs down onto said leg. Gargano can't quite kick him over the top so he pulls Balor back inside and gets two off a small package instead. Back in and Balor ties up the leg again until Gargano fights his way up one more time. An enziguri and dropkick put Balor on the floor but the suicide dive is countered. 1916 is blocked though and Gargano sends him into the steps, setting up the running flip dive off the apron.

The Lawn Dart is broken up and Balor hits a Nightmare on Helm Street for two. Gargano gets in a superkick followed by the Lawn Dart and they exchange kicks to the head. They slug it out with Gargano getting the better of it from the apron. The slingshot spear is blocked but the slingshot DDT connects for two. Back in and Balor cuts off the running superkick with the Sling Blade. That works so well that they do it again and Balor dropkicks him into the corner.

The Coup de Grace misses and Gargano pulls him into the Gargano Escape. That's reversed into a standing double stomp but 1916 is countered into the Gargano Escape again. This time Balor dives for the rope and bails to the floor, allowing Gargano to hit the John Woo dropkick into the barricade. Gargano loads up the announcers' table but Balor knocks him down, setting up his own John Woo dropkick off said table. Back in and the Coup de Grace connects hard, setting up a heck of a 1916 to finish Gargano at 27:19.

Rating: A-. These guys beat the heck out of each other and Balor won definitively, which should set him up for a huge match in Tampa, say against Lee perhaps. Gargano shrugging off the knee work was the only significant problem as it was fun to watch these two beat each other up until Gargano could keep going any longer. Heck of a match and Balor continues to look like a huge star around here.

Roderick Strong is ready to destroy Velveteen Dream on Wednesday. That's next week though because tonight, the rest of the Undisputed Era is ready to prove why they are the best in the world.

We recap Rhea Ripley vs. Bianca Belair for the Women's Title. Ripley became the biggest deal in the division and finally ended Shayna Baszler's title reign. Belair won a battle royal and doesn't like Ripley overlooking her to face Charlotte at Wrestlemania.

Women's Title: Bianca Belair vs. Rhea Ripley

Ripley is defending and goes for the arm to start but gets reversed into a waistlock to the mat. That doesn't last long though as Rhea is up with clotheslines and a dropkick but Belair grabs a cravate. A standing moonsault gives Belair two and she nearly drops Ripley on a Jackhammer attempt.

Belair goes full He Nan with a seated full nelson but Belair powers out again. The standing Cloverleaf is countered as Belair sends her shoulder first into the post. A spinebuster gives Belair a few near falls and she puts Ripley on top. That means an exchange of hard slaps to the face until Belair uses the hair whip to take over. The gorilla press drop shows off Belair's power but the KOD is countered.

Ripley kicks her in the chest but Belair pops up with the spear for the double knockdown. They slug it out from their knees but Ripley avoids the hair whip. Belair backdrops her over the top so Belair hits a big running flip dive. Ripley gets in a whip to the steps but blocks a sunset bomb back inside. That's fine with Ripley, who switches to the Riptide to retain at 13:33.

Rating: C+. Belair continues to be an athletic freak and she's grown on

me in recent months. Her problem at the moment is that she is developing a reputation for not being able to win the big one, though it's hard to imagine that she won't be Women's Champion one day. Ripley now has a clear path to Wrestlemania and Charlotte, which should be a heck of a showdown.

Post match Charlotte runs in and decks Ripley. She accepts the match at WrestleMania and sends Belair into the steps for a bonus.

Tag Team Titles: Undisputed Era vs. Broserweights

The Broserweights are challenging after winning the Dusty Classic. They drive out in a golf cart with the trophy in the back, plus matching "How Much Fish Could Bobby Fish Fry If Bobby Fish Could Fry Fish?" shirts. Matt Riddle isn't done and leads the fans in a singalong of the line, drawing the champs up to start the fight. Riddle kicks at O'Reilly to start so it's off to Fish, who gets suplexed down. Dunne comes in and blasts Fish with a clothesline before stomping on the arm.

Fish is sent outside for the middle rope moonsault but Fish sweeps the leg back inside. That allows the tag off to O'Reilly as the champs take over for the first time. O'Reilly twists the leg around the ropes and Fish kicks the other leg out to keep Dunne down. The champs collide though and it's off to Riddle to clean house. That means kicks and Brotons to both, plus a Bro To Sleep into a German suplex for two on O'Reilly.

Some knees to the face give Dunne two on O'Reilly but Dunne kicks the post by mistake. Riddle knees O'Reilly again and the Final Flash sets up a release German suplex. O'Reilly strikes him right back and they both go down to a nice reaction. Back up and Riddle gets in a spear on O'Reilly but Fish is back in with a chop block to Riddle. Double knees put the champs down and it's Dunne coming back in to strike it out with O'Reilly.

Dunne reverses O'Reilly's ankle lock into one of his own but gets reversed into a Scorpion Deathlock. Fish sleepers Riddle at the same time but Riddle knees O'Reilly and drops back onto Fish for the double escape. What looked to be a Doomsday Device is broken up and O'Reilly t-bone superplexes Riddle down.

O'Reilly kneebars Riddle but Dunne bends Fish's fingers and stomps onto O'Reilly's for a save of his own. Things settle down with Dunne bending O'Reilly's fingers but Riddle is drawn in to accidentally spear Dunne. Chasing the Dragon gets two and the fans are WAY into the kickout. Riddle is back up and makes a blind tag so it's time to knee a lot of people. The Bro To Sleep/enziguri combination gives us new champions at 16:58.

Rating: A-. This is the kind of wild tag match that makes NXT work so well and that's the kind of match you can always use on any show. I'm a bit surprised by the title change but the Undisputed Era has held the titles for the better part of ever so having them drop the things to a new team is a good idea. NXT doesn't have the deepest tag division in the world so this is the right way to go, if nothing else as the Undisputed Era continues its slide.

We recap the NXT Title match between Tommaso Ciampa and Adam Cole. Ciampa had to vacate the title due to a neck injury and now he's back to get the title he never lost. Cole is on the verge of becoming the longest reigning champion in the title's history but Ciampa is coming for Goldie because daddy's home.

NXT Title: Adam Cole vs. Tommaso Ciampa

Cole is defending and we're ready to go after the Big Match Intros. Ciampa puts him against the ropes and mocks Cole's pose, followed by a headlock for a bonus. It's too early for Willow's Bell so Ciampa goes with another headlock. That stays on for a bit until Ciampa gets up and chops him in the corner. Cole's Backstabber misses so he kicks Ciampa down instead and gives himself the applause.

Ciampa throws him over the announcers' table though and now we get the real self applause. A jumping enziguri misses Ciampa and he drops Cole across the barricade. That means a running knee to the head and a bunch of chops in the timekeeper's area. The big running knee makes it worse and Ciampa even hugs a fan. Ciampa misses a kick though and gets suplexed into the edge of the announcers' table for a delayed two. Cole kicks him in the face for two more but takes too long going up, meaning he has to block a sunset bomb.

A Backstabber out of the corner sets up a chinlock but Ciampa is up again. The Panama Sunrise is countered with a dropkick and they both need some time to get up. Ciampa grabs a torture rack bomb for his own two but Cole is right back with the fireman's carry backbreaker for two. Cole ties him in the corner but a sunset bomb is countered into the super Air Raid Crash for the VERY near fall and Ciampa is stunned. They head outside again with Ciampa powerbombing him onto the announcers' table (again, not through), followed by another to put Cole through it.

Back inside and Cole hits a quick superkick, only to get caught with Project Ciampa for two. They slug it out with Cole knocking him to the floor but a suicide dive is kneed out of the air. Back in again and Cole snaps off the brainbuster onto the knee for two as the fans are split again. They slowly fight up with Cole getting the better of it and hitting a Last Shot. Ciampa is smart enough to roll straight to the rope though, meaning it's time to head to the apron.

Another Air Raid Crash onto the apron puts them both down on the floor but Ciampa can't hit the Fairy Tale Ending. Cole can hit a Panama Sunrise off the announcers' table though and Ciampa is...not done as he's back up for Willow's Bell. The Fairy Tale Ending connects for two and Ciampa has nothing left. Cole changes pace with a Crossface but Ciampa reverses into one of his own. It's too close to the rope though and Cole bails outside after the break.

Cue Roderick Strong for a distraction though and O'Reilly and Fish take Ciampa down with a High/Low on the floor. That's only good for two as well so Ciampa hits Willow's Bell on Strong and nails a big corkscrew dive onto the other three. Back in and Cole hits a quick Last Shot for two and I let out an "oh come on". The ref gets bumped and Ciampa hits another Fairy Tale Ending for no count so here's Johnny Gargano (Where was he five minutes ago?) to throw the title to Ciampa...and then hit him with it instead. Cole retains the title at 33:23.

Rating: B+. I enjoyed it but these Cole main events are getting out of hand on a ridiculous level. They could have cut out probably seven to ten minutes of kickouts here and done the same thing, which isn't a good sign. That being said, the action was good and Gargano vs. Ciampa part

whatever number we're at should be good with a new twist on the whole thing. This pretty much leaves Velveteen Dream as the most likely challenger to Cole in Tampa as there aren't many other ways to go, save for Lee dropping the title in a hurry. Anyway, entertaining main event that could have been better with a few cuts.

Overall Rating: A. It never ceases to amaze me that this is probably considered one of the weaker Takeovers and it's still an incredible show. There's nothing close to bad on it and several very good matches, though it didn't have the big blow away one. You can piece together some of Takeover and it wouldn't surprise me to see a few cameos from NXT UK to really bump up the quality. What we got here was great though and it was an awesome show as Takeover continues to be the untouchable one.

Results

Keith Lee b. Dominick Dijakovic – Big Bang Catastrophe

Dakota Kai b. Tegan Nox – Toss onto a table

Finn Balor b. Johnny Gargano – 1916

Rhea Ripley b. Bianca Belair – Riptide

Broserweights b. Undisputed Era – Bro To Sleep/Enziguri combination to O'Reilly

Adam Cole b. Tommaso Ciampa – Belt shot to the head

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Takeover: Portland Preview



IMG Credit: WWE

This is a different kind of show for more ways than you almost ever see. In this case, we have a show on a Sunday, a Takeover without a major event from WWE and a six match card. I'm not sure if those things are better or worse for what we'll be seeing but NXT has not been as strong as usual of late. This is where they get their reputation from though so let's get to it.

Women's Title: Rhea Ripley(c) vs. Bianca Belair

I'm not sure what to expect from this one and that's a hard thing to pull off. What makes this so much better is the fact that while they are certainly teasing Charlotte vs. Ripley at WrestleMania, they might be going a swerve in the form of a triple threat match with Belair vs. Ripley vs. Charlotte. Now I'm not sure how great that would be, but it's a possibility.

That being said, I don't think it's a possibility that is going to become a reality so we'll say that Ripley retains

here. NXT clearly sees something huge in her and I don't think they're going to take the title off of her in her first Takeover defense. Unless there is something surprising like Charlotte interfering to cost Ripley the title, and I'm not sure I see that happening, I think we'll be seeing Ripley retain.

Tag Team Titles: Undisputed Era(c) vs. Broserweights

The Undisputed Era is reaching the Shayna Baszler point of "someone has to beat them". Granted that has been the case for a long time now and yet it never seems to end. Now that's an interesting point as you start to wonder who that team is, because there isn't a very deep tag division in NXT. Hence the Broserweights being put together to get this spot after winning a handful of matches.

I'll take the Undisputed Era to retain here, as I think we're coming up on the dream match at Takeover: Tampa where DIY takes the titles off of them. The Broserweights can keep teaming together, but there isn't a need to switch the titles here. The Undisputed Era has held them for so long now that another six weeks isn't going to matter, so switch them in Tampa instead of here.

Johnny Gargano vs. Finn Balor

Here's your showcase match and it's a very good one at that. The story makes perfect sense here as you have the former star against the new one, with Gargano needing to prove that he's as good as he seems to be. Balor is someone with main roster credentials and having Gargano beat him would be a huge moment for him. You could see this one going either way though and that's what makes it fascinating.

I think I'll go with Balor here, as there is a case for both of them. First and foremost, Balor is Balor and someone who brings instant main roster credibility to NXT. At the same time though, Gargano has one of the best resumes and legacies

in NXT, but he also has a reputation for losing. He's a lot better when he's losing though and it's not like another loss is going to hurt him that much. Gargano winning wouldn't shock me, but I'll take Balor.

Dakota Kai vs. Tegan Nox

This is a good example of a match where the extra time for the build may have hurt it a bit. The whole thing is built on Kai being the most horrible person ever by taking out the adorable Nox's already injured knee. The problem is that was three months ago and a lot of the steam has gone away. The heat will be back as soon as we see a clip of the attack, but it doesn't feel as important as it once did.

Again you could go either way here, but if they want Kai to go anywhere, she needs to win here so I'll say that. Nox is someone who has that underdog/never say die aspect to her and that is going to be enough to carry her a long way. Kai is still new to this massive heel turn deal and having her lose (again) wouldn't leave her with much to do going forward. Let her win here and see where she can go with it.

North American Title: Keith Lee(c) vs. Dominick Dijakovic

I don't think I'm alone when I say this is the match a lot of people have wanted to see again. These guys showed a completely new aspect to big man matches and they were some of the most exciting things I've seen in a long time. I had wanted them to do it on a bigger stage and that is what they are getting here, with a title on the line to boot.

I'll take Lee to retain, as he seems in line to become the next big thing in NXT. Therefore, you don't take the title off of him here (barring what would be a very surprising turnaround to give him the title shot at Takeover: Tampa), though Dijakovic winning it would hardly be the worst thing in the world. But yeah Lee retains here, as it is going to take a Herculean effort to get the belt off of him.

NXT Title: Adam Cole(c) vs. Tommaso Ciampa

This is the match that got me into the show because Ciampa's promos have been outstanding. He never lost the title and pinned Cole to win WarGames so there is already a story built in. Should Cole retain, there is a strong chance he sets the record for the longest NXT Title reign in history, which is a pretty big deal given the history the title has. I'm more curious what happens if Ciampa loses though, as this is pretty much his life.

I think we're going to find out though, as I'll take Cole to retain. It leaves open the question of who is left to fight him (though a certain Dreamy one would seem to be an option) but for now, Ciampa doesn't get Goldie back. I'm not sure if he ever does, but I don't think he does here. It's another coin flip (dang NXT is good at setting those up), though I'm going with Cole retaining.

Overall Thoughts

I'm not sure what to expect from this show as the television shows haven't been as great lately. What matters the most though is that we'll get down to just the wrestling here and that's where NXT shines. I do not believe they are capable of a bad (or even average) Takeover and I don't see this one going any differently. Just give us a good show and everything will be fine. Make it a great one and NXT is back, which is what I'd bet on happening.

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