

NXT – September 20, 2017: Where Do We Go From Here?

NXT

Date: September 20, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Percy Watson, Nigel McGuinness

This week should be centered around the fallout from last week with the Undisputed Era attacking the British contingent, which could set up a heck of a six man tag somewhere down the line. Other than that we need to find out where the NXT Champion Drew McIntyre ties into this as well. Let's get to it.

In Memory of Bobby Heenan.

Opening sequence.

Johnny Gargano vs. Tino Sabbatelli

Gargano beat Tino's partner Riddick Moss last week. Tino drives him into the corner and messes with Johnny's head, earning himself a hard shot to the face. A dropkick takes Johnny down but the fans still think Tino sucks. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Johnny fights up and heads to the apron. The sunset flip is countered into a powerslam but Tino doesn't cover due to reasons of inexperience. The delay lets Gargano hit a superkick and grab the Gargano Escape for the tap at 3:48.

Rating: C-. Gargano getting a win here is the right call but it's an interesting idea to not have him mow through everyone as people tend to do around here. It was cool to see Gargano clear out some people, though I'm glad seeing Sabbatelli and Moss get some ring time. Tino looked better of the two and I'd like to see him make a few more appearances.

William Regal gives Roderick Strong a title shot in two weeks.

We look at Asuka vacating the Women's Title.

Sonya DeVille says she never fought Asuka because Asuka knew what would happen if they got in the ring. If anyone has a problem with that, they can put their hair up and square up. That's a really bad catchphrase.

Bianca Belair vs. Lacey Evans

Belair wastes no time in taking Lacey down and slowly stomping away with a good cocky attitude as a bonus. Evans bails to the floor so Belair pulls on the arms for a bit. Back in and Evans takes her down and gets two off a legdrop as the fans aren't the most interested in this so far. Some clothesline and a slingshot Bronco Buster have Belair in trouble and the backflip into a splash (kind of a moonsault minus the jump) gets two. Belair whips her with the hair (still not liking that) and hits an Alley-Oop (powerbomb but she drops Evans backwards onto her face) for the pin at 4:18.

Rating: C. This was just a step above a squash for Bianca and that's far from surprising. She looked great in the tournament and I could see her going quite far around here, especially with the hair thing. Evans has a gimmick but I'm not sure she has enough to back it up in the ring, at least not that we've seen so far.

Here's Aleister Black (rocking the heck out of a suit) for his first promo in the NXT arena. Fifteen years ago, he started a journey that brought him here to NXT. He's seen a lot of things and he's put a lot of them on his skin to remember them by. His journey in NXT is just beginning...and here's Velveteen Dream to cut him off.

Dream says everything that fades to black will one day come to life. Even with all this light surrounding the Dream, he doesn't see anything in Black. In Black, he sees a man full of woe and skin covered in lies. Black must be afraid of the light but Dream knows that he has a heart, even if it's in the wrong place. Black kicks him in the face and sits down, only to have Dream drop to his knees right in front of him. Dream crawls backwards to quite the reaction.

We look at Lars Sullivan attacking No Way Jose more than once.

Dakota Kai is new around here but wants to be Women's Champion.

No Way Jose vs. Lars Sullivan

Jose goes right after him to start but his crossbody has no effect. Some knees to the ribs have Jose out on the floor and Sullivan drives him ribs first into the apron. Back in and we hit the neck crank as this is a squash so far. Jose fights up and jumps on his back for a chinlock but one heck of a shoulder takes him down. Sullivan adds a top rope headbutt, followed by the standing Boss Man Slam to end Jose at 3:11.

Rating: D+. They might have something with Sullivan though it's a shame that it came at Jose's expense. I know he might not be the most popular guy in the world but the dancing gimmick is an anchor around him. Sullivan could be great as a wrecking ball and built up as someone to be slayed later on. Good performance here.

Trent Seven/Tyler Bate vs. Kyle O'Reilly/Bobby Fish

Kyle and Bobby have Adam Cole in their corner. Bate and O'Reilly start things off as we hit the MOUSTACHE MOUNTAIN chant. Tyler spins out of a wristlock and hits a good looking dropkick into a nipup. It's off to Seven vs. Fish but Kyle won't let Trent try a big dive. The distraction lets Bobby run him over and it's time for the knee strikes. Seven's arms get cranked at the same time and a double kick to the chest gets two.

Trent finally gets in a kick of his own but Kyle breaks up a hot tag attempt. Like any good villain, Cole offers a distraction so Fish can drive Seven into the barricade. Back from a break with Seven still in trouble but being able to escape a fireman's carry. A hard clothesline is enough for the hot tag to Bate, who comes in with a springboard European uppercut.

Kyle charges into a t-bone suplex and a standing shooting star gets two. Everything breaks down and a belly to back suplex/powerbomb combo (cool) is good for two more on Kyle. The Tyler Driver 97 is countered into a guillotine choke though as Fish takes care of Seven. The unnamed Chasing the Dragon gets two on Bate thanks to a foot on the ropes. A second attempt doesn't work as well as Bate sends them into each other and makes the desperation tag. Seven

grabs a half crab on Kyle but Cole takes out Bate. Something like Total Elimination ends Seven at 12:32.

Rating: B. This was the good match you probably expected it to be and that's all you can ask for. Assuming this story continues, it's all about the addition of Cole and Pete Dunne, which could turn into one of the most entertaining six man tags in a very long time. Of course that's assuming Cole isn't busy fighting McIntyre for the NXT Title.

Speaking of McIntyre, here he is to chase off the Undisputed Era. The trio stands in front of a curtain and that can't end well. Sanity walks through said curtain and the trio bails while Drew stands in the ring to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. This was a great example of putting a bunch of stories into one show and capping it off with a big match at the end. They have a bunch of ways to go for Houston and that makes for a much more interesting show in a way. Cole could get the title shot but at the same time it's hard to imagine Black not getting into the title hunt very soon. Then again it's hard to imagine Drew being champion for very long as he seems to be a much better fit on the main roster than around here. Anyway, good effort this week and I'm interested in where this stuff is going.

Results

Johnny Gargano b. Tino Sabbatelli – Gargano Escape

Bianca Belair b. Lacey Evans – Alley-Oop

Lars Sullivan b. No Way Jose – Standing Boss Man Slam

Kyle O'Reilly/Bobby Fish b. Trent Seven/Tyler Bate – High/Low to Seven

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NXT – August 23, 2017: The British Nightcap

NXT

Date: August 23, 2017

Location: Barclays Center, New York City, New York

Commentators: Percy Watson, Nigel McGuinness, Mauro Ranallo

It's another one of those special episodes comprised of the dark matches from Saturday's Takeover: Brooklyn III. Therefore expect a lot of recaps as we don't have anything new from Full Sail just yet. What we do have are the British guys in town and that's almost guaranteed to be awesome. Let's get to it.

We open with a package on Saturday's show.

No Way Jose vs. Lars Sullivan

Jose pulls about a dozen fans out of the crowd for a conga line but Sullivan jumps him from behind. Something like a standing Boss Man Slam plants Jose and Sullivan leaves. No match.

Video on Johnny Gargano vs. Andrade Cien Almas with a DIY shirt doing Gargano in.

Gargano says the loss was his own fault and he has no one to blame but himself. That was far from the end for Johnny Wrestling.

Video on Asuka vs. Ember Moon with Asuka retaining the title in a big surprise despite suffering a broken collarbone.

Asuka held a mini press conference after her win and says she was

better that night. She was never worried either.

The broken collarbone is acknowledged with a recovery time of 6-8 weeks. The title's status isn't mentioned but it can be assumed that it won't be vacated.

Pete Dunne says the UK Brand started when he won the title and tonight, he's proving that it's his division. Wolfgang, his partner tonight, wants a shot after they win tonight. Pete says focus on tonight.

Peyton Royce vs. Sarah Logan

Logan fights out of a headlock to start and trips Peyton into an armbar. Back up and Peyton kicks her down, setting up a very flexible choke in the corner. A German suplex gets Logan out of trouble but Billie Kay grabs the hands to block a second. Rollups are exchanged until Peyton grabs a fisherman's suplex for the pin at 4:19.

Rating: D+. Billie and Peyton are perfect for their roles as the good looking and annoying women who you want to see get beaten up without being too serious. They're likely never getting close to the Women's Title but they're not the kind of people who need to be. Just let them do their thing a little while longer and then let them do it on the main roster. This was fine for what it was.

Video on Sanity winning the Tag Team Titles.

Video on the NXT Title match with McIntyre winning the title. Adam Cole, Bobby Fish and Kyle O'Reilly's post match beatdown is included as well.

McIntyre will address the trio's actions next week.

Roode was livid after his loss and wanted to leave. Roderick Strong showed up, blew him a kiss, and said see you soon.

Roode's Smackdown debut is shown as well.

Roode says he'll embarrass Strong one more time and then he's winning the NXT Title back and walking onto Smackdown as champion.

Video on Hideo Itami vs. Aleister Black.

Black had no comment after his win.

Pete Dunne/Wolfgang vs. Tyler Bate/Trent Seven

Dunne gets a very strong reaction and starts on the mat with Bate. Neither can get anywhere and it's off to a double nip up for a standoff. Back from a break with Bate scoring with a dropkick and Moustache Mountain taking over on Pete. It's off to Wolfgang who gets caught in a DDT, only to avoid a charge and bring in Dunne to work on the arm. The shoulder gets sent into the corner and Pete cranks on an armbar while bending the fingers back.

Wolfgang takes him down with a waistlock but a dragon suplex gets Trent out of trouble. The hot tag brings in Bate for a t-bone suplex and a nip up for good measure. That bounce off the ropes into a clothesline sets up the airplane spin (Mauro: "The human fidget spinner Tyler Bate!"). Seven gets dropped off the apron as Dunne gets caught with a capo kick. The Tyler Driver 97 connects but Dunne made a blind tag, allowing Wolfgang to hit the Howling for the pin at 8:17.

Rating: B. Bate and Dunne have some of the best chemistry I've seen in years and the fans react to everything they do. Bate is getting better every single time he's out there, partially because he's getting older and more physically mature. Dunne has an awesome sneer and looks like someone who could beat the tar out of you despite being only twenty three. Wolfgang and Seven were fine but just outclassed here, which is going to be the case with most of the British talent compared to those two.

Overall Rating: C+. I like these shows more than I used to as they're a great way to decompress after a very long weekend of wrestling. After everything is so big over the last few days, it's nice to have something so simple and easy with a good main event. Fun show here, especially with Bate and Dunne around.

Results

Peyton Royce b. Sarah Logan – Fisherman's suplex

Pete Dunne/Wolfgang b. Tyler Bate/Trent Seven – Howling to Bate

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UK Championship Special: They're Not Old Enough For This

UK Championship Special

Date: May 19, 2017

Location: Epic Studios, Norwich, England

Commentators: Jim Ross, Nigel McGuinness

This was a special two day event taped about two weeks ago as WWE continues their UK expansion. The idea here is to set up the UK Title match at Takeover: Chicago, which was announced before this show ever aired. The initial tournament shows were a lot of fun so hopefully this continues the trend. Let's get to it.

We look back at the tournament with Bate shocking everyone, including himself, by winning the title. The participants talk about how it's changed their careers in a positive way. Everyone is after Bate and the title though.

Video on Wolfgang, a big Scottish wrestler who is more aggressive now that he lost to Bate.

Joseph Conners is a high flier says his future looks good.

Wolfgang vs. Joseph Conners

The arena looks a bit dark. They trade shoulders to start with Wolfgang kicking him in the face to take over. JR makes sure to tee up McGuinness for some easy questions, which is exactly what Nigel is supposed to be able to do as an analyst. Wolfgang blocks some suplex attempts before lifting Conners up for a very delayed one of his own.

It's way too early for the Howling (Swanton) though as Conners shoves him to the floor for a crash. Back in and a bad looking slingshot splash gives Conners two as the fans are trying to get back into this. Nigel gets into the simple story of the English vs. Scottish rivalry as Conners kicks Wolfgang in the ribs to keep him on the floor. Joseph throws him back in to crank on something like a seated abdominal stretch.

That's enough to start a comeback (as is always the case) but a crossbody messes with Wolfgang's damaged ribs. Wolfgang thinks about the Howling again but comes down instead. A gutbuster sends Conners outside as the fans seem to have sided with Wolfgang. The ribs are made even worse by a sitout spinebuster but Conners gets speared out of the air. The Howling gives Wolfgang the pin at 11:00.

Rating: C+. Good but not perfect way to open the show. There wasn't much of a spark here and a face power wrestler vs. a heel speed wrestler is always a bit of a weird choice. The ribs were a simple enough story to keep things rolling but the match was nothing that hasn't been done if not done better before.

Tyler Bate and Mark Andrews are getting ready.

TJP/Brian Kendrick vs. Dan Moloney/Rich Swann

So it's a match on a UK show that only has one person from the UK (Moloney). That's probably not the best choice to use on a show like this, especially after the lackluster opener. Also, you have RICH SWANN on the card and you don't use him in the opener? This is quite the curiously booked show. Finally, TJP (who JR keeps calling

Perkins) covers his ears to block out Rich's music.

Kendrick and Moloney get things going with a feeling out process until the veteran drags Dan into the corner. TJP comes in and the fans start singing about him in some rather unflattering terms. JR: "What's this wanker thing they're talking about?" Nigel basically tells him not to ask if JR wants to keep his job.

The heels try some cheating with TJP grabbing an arm over the ropes, only to make the mistake of not looking and working over Brian's arm by mistake. TJP comes in and gets kicked in the head for a hesitant two, perhaps because Moloney made sure to look at the camera (which he was probably told to do) first. It's off to Swann for some dabbing, which angers TJP so much that he misses a charge out to the floor.

One heck of a flip dive takes out both Kendrick and TJP, which is made even better when Swann sticks the landing. Back in and some double teaming puts Swann in trouble for all of fifteen seconds before he kicks Kendrick in the face. Moloney comes in off the hot tag for some chops and a clothesline to Kendrick.

More double teaming (they're good at that) takes Dan down though and TJP covers his ears to block out the singing. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Dan backdrops his way to freedom, setting up the real hot tag to Swann. Everything breaks down and Swann gets caught in the Captain's Hook with Moloney making the save. Swann is tossed to the floor and Kendrick grabs a sloppy rollup (with tights) for the pin at 11:30.

Rating: C. This didn't work and the fact that Moloney is only twenty years old has a lot to do with it. You can tell that he's really young and is still having to think a lot out there, which can cause some problems. That's not say he was bad, but you could tell he was easily the weakest in the ring. The rest of the match was good enough but they never really hit the top speed that you've seen them reach before. Granted a lot of that could be due to the whole being in another country issue, which is a common problem.

We look at Wolfgang injuring Trent Seven's arm the previous night.

Seven doesn't have a broken bone and is going to keep at it. Pete Dunne, his opponent for the night, comes in and hits him in the bad arm. That guy is a special kind of heel.

Video on Pete Dunne, who is rather evil. The tournament got him the credit he deserves and he's been making money ever since.

Trent Seven has a sweet mustache and hits people really hard.

Trent Seven vs. Pete Dunne

The winner gets a UK Title shot at Takeover: Chicago. Dunne comes out with his Progress Wrestling Championship but it's not on the line here. The fans are split here between Mustache Mountain and the Bruiserweight before going with BRITISH STRONG STYLE instead. Pete starts on the good arm in an interesting strategy but Seven goes to the ropes.

One heck of a chop with the bad arm drops Dunne but he kicks Seven in the arm to send Trent outside. The arm gets crushed between the steps and the post before it's back to working on both arms at once. A kick to the mustached head gets two but he sends Pete outside for a flip dive.

Back in and another shot to the arm looks to set up the Bitter End, only to have Trent nail a hard left armed lariat for two. A suplex into a powerslam gives Trent two more but the arm is sent into the post. Pete can't quite grab a Kimura (which sends JR into a mini rant about how it's a double wristlock and NOT a Kimura) so he sends the bad arm into the barricade instead.

The arm is good enough for a dragon suplex onto the apron and both guys are left in a heap on the floor. They both dive in at nine and Dunne manages to flip out of a dragon superplex, only to eat a huge lariat for a very delayed two. The Seven Star Lariat is broken up though and we hit another double wristlock. Trent slips out again but walks into the Bitter End to send Pete to Chicago at 14:47.

Rating: B+. This was all about the arm and Dunne being one of the most evil wrestlers around because he'll do whatever it takes to win. The fact that the match was another brutal back and forth fight

makes Dunne look great all over again. Seven seems like a comedy guy with the mustache stuff but he's more than capable of backing it up in the ring.

Dunne says he'll be champion by any means necessary.

We recap Tyler Bate vs. Mark Andrews. Bate (now twenty years old) won the inaugural title in January while Andrews was a semi-finalist. It's the young upstart vs. the slightly more experienced high flier.

UK Title: Tyler Bate vs. Mark Andrews

Bate is defending. The fans serenade Bate with a song and then boo someone out of the building for trying a TNA chant. They take their time to start with Andrews working on the arm before Bate twists all over the place to escape. Bate powers out of a front facelock by casually setting Mark on top and walking away to get under his skin a bit. Andrews gets taken down to the mat for a double arm crank but he reaches the ropes and gets a clean break. That might be brought up again later.

They trade some flips and cartwheel up before nipping into a standoff for some applause. The sportsmanship starts going away as they go nose to nose and yell a bit. Andrews goes back to the technical stuff and manages a modified Octopus Hold. Bate shows off the freakish strength by walking the hold over to the ropes for the break. Tyler slaps on a reverse Boston crab which Nigel names and JR calls innovative. Something tells me JR isn't a big Colt Cabana fan. Bate grabs the arms to lift Mark up for a little rocking back and forth. Mark comes right back by sending him outside for a big flip dive and a double stomp to the chest for no cover. With nothing else working, Bate starts swinging before avoiding a charge to send Mark outside. This time it's Tyler hitting a dive of his own but it's too early for the Tiger Driver 97.

A Frankendriver gives Andrews two and he takes Bate to the apron for a standing Sliced Bread #2. Mark's moonsault to the floor is caught so he goes with a tornado DDT instead. Unfortunately Bate is out on

the floor and therefore able to kick out when Mark finally gets him back inside. Mark gets crotched on top (Fans: "NO MORE KIDS!") and takes a jumping European uppercut to put both guys down. Of course that means they slug it out from their knees with Bate getting the better of it, as you might expect.

There's the airplane spin but Bate takes too much time resetting, allowing Mark to hit a reverse Frankendriver for a close two. Now the fans are getting into these near falls because they're smart enough to know the match wasn't ending earlier. Bate is ready for the shooting star but his super Regal Roll is countered into a super hurricanrana, followed by a running shooting star for two.

The champ is reeling but still manages to earn his independent credibility with a superkick. His suplex is countered into the Stundog Millionaire but the shooting star hits Bate's raised knees. The fans get behind Bate again as he kicks Mark in the head, followed by the Tyler Driver 97 to retain at 24:15.

Rating: A-. There's very little I enjoy watching more than taking two wrestlers and having them look so polished and untouchable at first and watching them be broken down until they can barely stand. That's exactly what we got here and it made for one heck of a fight. Bate is scary good for his age and TNA continues to look like a bunch of morons for wasting someone capable of doing this. If you watched Andrews in TNA, you would think he was a one move wrestler. Now he had a great match that went nearly twenty five minutes. Who do you think did the better job with him?

Post match Dunne comes out to deck Andrews, drawing out William Regal to stare him down. Bate and Dunne stare each other down to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. The first two matches, while good, really do feel like little more than weak appetizers before the two outstanding feature matches. You can feel a real feud here with Bate vs. Dunne and it's no surprise that their match in Chicago was a near masterpiece. Fix up the first two matches on this show and it's a classic. As it is, it's just very good.

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NXT – February 15, 2017: The NXT Special

NXT

Date: February 15, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Nigel McGuinness, Percy Watson

We've got two big matches for tonight with a title on the line.

First up it's the Aussie women Billie Kay and Peyton Royce teaming up to face Liv Morgan and a mystery partner. We'll cap it off with Tyler Bate making his first defense of the WWE UK Title against the debuting Trent Seven. Let's get to it.

Quick look at Bate vs. Seven.

Opening sequence.

Authors of Pain vs. Garrison Spears/Lance Anoa'i

Non-title and Lance is Samu's son. It's total domination with stereo

Death Valley Drivers putting the jobbers into the corner. The Final Chapter ends Spears at 1:20.

The jobbers get a Super Collider post match.

Video on Tyler Bate.

Billie Kay/Peyton Royce vs. Liv Morgan/Ember Moon

Kind of an obvious pick. Moon spins away from Billie to start and the Aussie is already looking shaken. Billie is smart enough to twist away and get in a kick to the ribs, only to get tossed down with a suplex. The hot tag brings in Morgan to a very limited reaction (that's hard to do in NXT) for the house cleaning. An STO gets two on Peyton as everything breaks down. Moon gets sent outside and Billie knees Morgan in the side of the head for the pin at 3:18.

Rating: C-. I'm still confused by Morgan as they seem to want her to be the new big star of the division but keep having her do jobs in the bigger matches like this one. It's also interesting that they didn't have Moon get the pin here as it's pretty clear that she's going to be the next challenger for Asuka's title and she wasn't exactly the star of the match here.

We look back at Sanity telling Tye Dillinger that he belongs to the team and then beating him down later in the night. No Way Jose and Roderick Strong made the save.

Strong and Jose don't like bullies and respect Dillinger enough to give him a hand.

Here's DIY with something to say. They realized their dream in Toronto but that dream became a nightmare in San Antonio. They've never fought anyone like the Authors of Pain but they saw doubt in their eyes. No matter how much they're beaten down they'll never quit fighting so it's time for a rematch. Cue Paul Ellering to say the match can take place in two weeks. DIY doesn't want to wait but here's the Revival to beat them down, only to have the Authors chase them off.

Video on Trent Seven.

Video on Kassius Ohno, who returns soon.

General Manager William Regal announces a #1 contenders triple threat match for next week between Peyton Royce, Ember Moon and Liv Morgan.

UK Title: Tyler Bate vs. Trent Seven

Bate is defending. They start slowly with both guys having a clean break and offering a twirl of the others mustache. Bate bounces off the much bigger Seven until Trent runs him over with a much harder version. Nigel starts talking about cricket and gets in a few jabs at Watson (not that difficult) as the slow beating continues while taking us to a break.

Back with Trent getting two off a backslide and Bate giving us that great scared face in the corner. Tyler finally gets going and knocks Trent outside for a good looking dive over the top. Back in and the Seven Stars Lariat is broken up so Tyler grabs the airplane spin. Since it's just an airplane spin though, Trent pops up and gets in a powerbomb for two. A half crab (not a great one though) has Bate in trouble but the hold doesn't last that long.

It's time for rights and left (Bop and Bam if you haven't been formally introduced) but Seven just blasts him with the Seven Star Lariat for two. You know, if it hardly ever finishes anyone, it's not really a finisher. Trent takes his sweet time going up and gets caught in a super exploder suplex for two. Bate gets all fired up and hits the rolling kick to the head, followed by the Tyler Driver '97 for the pin at 15:39.

Rating: B. I'm not really feeling Seven yet but I'm digging the heck out of Bate the more I see him. The fact that the guy is just nineteen years old is mind blowing as the guy looks like he's been doing this for years, despite also looking like he's about fourteen years old. These matches don't really have stories but they're knocking the heck out of the work, which is all they can really do at this point.

They shake hands post match.

Overall Rating: B-. Kind of a middle of the road show this week as

we're still getting ready for the bigger stories but it was still entertaining enough. The show breezed by and that makes for a very easy fifty minute show, especially with a strong main event. They also made sure to announce stuff for the future, which is still one of their greatest strengths. It's never "what does someone have in store" but rather "this is what you're going to get". That's a very key difference and incredibly important.

Results

Authors of Pain b. Garrison Spears/Lance Anoa'i – Final Chapter to Spears

Peyton Royce/Billie Kay b. Ember Moon/Liv Morgan – Knee to Morgan's head

Tyler Bate b. Trent Seven – Tyler Driver '97

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

Rules Britannia

WWE UK Tournament

Date: January 15, 2017

Location: Empress Ballroom, Blackpool, England

Commentators: Michael Cole, Nigel McGuinness

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

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

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

The second round has twenty minute time limits.

Quarterfinals: Pete Dunne vs. Sam Gradwell

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

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

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

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

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

Quarterfinals: Joseph Conners vs. Mark Andrews

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

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

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

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

Fit Finlay is here.

Quarterfinals: Wolfgang vs. Trent Seven

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

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

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

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

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

Quarterfinals: Jordan Devlin vs. Tyler Bate

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

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

I love the little wave that Bate does.

Here are the updated brackets:

Pete Dunne

Mark Andrews

Wolfgang

Tyler Bate

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

Robbie Brookside is here.

Semifinals: Pete Dunne vs. Mark Andrews

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

hurricanrana to take over again.

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

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

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

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

Semifinals: Wolfgang vs. Tyler Bate

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

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

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

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

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

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

Neville vs. Tommy End

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

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

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

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

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

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

UK Title: Pete Dunne vs. Tyler Bate

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WWE UK Tournament

Date: January 14, 2017

Location: Empress Ballroom, Blackpool, England

Commentators: Michael Cole, Nigel McGuinness

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

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

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

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

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

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

We look at the brackets.

Video on Trent Seven, complete with clips Progress Wrestling.

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

All first round matches have a fifteen minute time limit.

Trent Seven vs. H.C. Dyer

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

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

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

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

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

Balor is in the front row.

Danny Burch vs. Jordan Devlin

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

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

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

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

Video on Saxton Huxley, who is very intelligent.

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

Saxton Huxley vs. Sam Gradwell

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

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

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

Dave Taylor is at ringside.

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

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

Pete Dunne vs. Roy Johnson

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

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

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

Dunne won't shake hands post match.

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

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

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

Wolfgang vs. Tyson T-Bone

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

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

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

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

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

Joseph Conners vs. James Drake

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dan Moloney vs. Mark Andrews

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

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

Video on Tucker, who is a technical wrestler.

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

Tucker vs. Tyler Bate

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

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

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

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

Here are the quarterfinal brackets:

Tyler Bate

Jordan Devlin

Trent Seven

Wolfgang

Mark Andrews

Joseph Conners

Pete Dunne

Sam Gradwell

Cole gives us a highlight package on the night.

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

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

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