

CUBED CIRCLE NEWSLETTER ISSUE #237 JUNE 12TH 2016

Cubed Circle Newsletter 237 – Who's Huntin' Hunt?

We (Ben) are back with the last of the 'Exam Session of Doom' newsletters for the time being with coverage of all the major news from the week in wrestling including Ospreay's BOSJ victory, the return of Brock Lesnar to the UFC, Cody Rhodes' bucket list, NXT Takeover: The End, Monday Night RAW and more!

– Ryan Clingman, *Cubed Circle Newsletter Editor*

The Pro-Wres Digest for June 5th – June 11th

Ben Carass

Top Stories:



While still under WWE contract, and with the approval of the company, Brock Lesnar will be fighting Mark Hunt at UFC 200 on July 9th at the T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas. The return of the former UFC and WWE World Heavyweight Champion was officially announced at the UFC 199 show on 4/6 when he appeared at the very end of the commercial for UFC 200. On the broadcast, Joe Rogan appeared to have no idea what was going on and Mike Goldberg had to explain that Lesnar was coming back to fight. Hunt was named as Lesnar's opponent on 6/6 during an interview with Brock on ESPN's [Sports Centre](#). Lesnar talked about regretting the decision to retire from MMA, which he made prior to WrestleMania 31 last year when he re-signed with the WWE. He also noted that he called Dana White first and things got rolling from there, with White and McMahon making “billionaire decisions” to put the deal together. Dave Meltzer reported in the Observer this week that Lesnar had a clause added

to his WWE contract which allowed him to take one fight in the UFC and that Brock and the WWE had no influence in choosing the opponent. In the summer of 2012, WWE and UFC reached an agreement for Lesnar to fight Fedor Emelianenko in what would have been one of the biggest heavyweight main events in history for the long-promised show at AT&T Stadium in Dallas, TX. Fedor ultimately pulled out of the fight after the death of his father and the deal fell apart, although WWE and UFC must have clearly remained on good terms for this new deal to have been struck. I don't know what Vince McMahon is thinking letting Lesnar take the fight with Hunt,

because there is a real chance of Hunt landing a couple of clean shots and that would almost certainly be the end of the fight. Lesnar could always shoot in for the take-down straight away and go for his short hammer-fists of doom, but WWE are still taking a huge risk by putting the only performer they have with any real badass legitimacy in a position where the likelihood of him getting knocked out is very high indeed.

The news was broken earlier in the day – around 3pm PST – by Ariel Helwani of [MMA Fighting](#), which resulted in Helwani and other reporters being ejected from the Forum in Inglewood, CA, before the main event of Luke Rockhold vs. Michael Bisping. Helwani was told by Dana White himself that he was banned for life and to, “go cover Bellator,” because he was, “too negative.” After receiving a ton of criticism and negative press, UFC predictably made a U-turn on the life time ban for Helwani and the rest of the MMA Fighting crew. UFC released a [statement](#) on 6/6, barely 24 hours after the incident with Helwani, and tried to save face by claiming that, “recurring tactics used by [MMA Fighting's] lead reporter extended beyond the purpose of journalism.” Either way, UFC looked incredibly bad for essentially banning a man who happened to be good at his job as a reporter. WWE released a [statement](#) later that night (June 5th) after the commercial aired, confirming the “one-off opportunity” for Lesnar and made sure to note that Brock was still under contract to WWE:

“Brock Lesnar remains under contract to WWE, however, he has been granted a one-off opportunity to compete at UFC 200. Following this milestone event on July 9, Brock will return to WWE for SummerSlam on Sunday, August 21 live on WWE Network.”

Once the news of Lesnar fighting at UFC 200 was officially announced, one of the major questions people had was what the WWE would get in return for allowing Brock to fight. The answer came on 6/6 when [Fox Sports](#) reported that Paige VanZant was in “preliminary talks” with WWE about making an appearance at this year's SummerSlam on 21/8 in Brooklyn, NY. VanZant's manager told Fox Sports that WWE had reached out to VanZant to appear “in some capacity” at WWE's second biggest show of the year, although it is not clear yet what her role will be and it is highly unlikely that she will be working a match. It is also likely that WWE have asked for more than just a one-off appearance from VanZant; certainly UFC will help promote SummerSlam in some capacity, however when Ronda Rousey's schedule is free you would expect WWE to make a play to bring her back in. On the subject of Rousey, [Forbes](#) reported on 8/6 WWE are “confident” they will be able to secure her for a match at WrestleMania 33.

Another aspect of this story is the USADA drug testing procedure, which Dave Meltzer covered on 8/6 for [F4Wonline](#). The gist of the testing story is that Lesnar was registered by USADA into the UFC Anti-Doping Policy testing pool on June 6th 2016 (after the commercial had already aired) and is being treated as a newly signed athlete as opposed to a fighter coming out of retirement. The USADA testing procedure includes a policy to prevent fighters manipulating the system by using “retirement” as a gimmick and loading up on PEDs while being outside of the testing pool. A returning fighter must now give a written notice to UFC of their intent to fight and enter themselves into the testing pool for a period of four months before competing. There is of course a loophole, because why wouldn't there be? A fighter is eligible for exemption to the four-month rule if “exceptional circumstances” come into play and, “where strict application of that rule would be manifestly unfair to an athlete.” In the story for F4Wonline, Meltzer noted that the UFC told him Lesnar was indeed exempt from the four-month rule due to Lesnar's last fight being on December 30th 2011, long before the UFC Anti-Doping testing was in effect. The key line out of the UFC on the deal is that Lesnar needed permission from WWE to take the fight and therefore he only signed the bout agreement on Friday (3/6), so he was unable to start the Anti-Doping Policy any earlier.

After posting his independent wrestling “bucket list” last week, Cody Rhodes was officially announced for PWG's Battle of Los Angeles 2016. “BOLA” was third from the top of Rhodes fantasy to-do list and PWG [Tweeted](#) out the same picture of the list with a red check next to, “BOLA.” The terms of Rhodes' WWE release preclude him from competing until August 19th and he already has a booking lined up for that date at the Evolve 66 show in Joppa, MD. As noted last week, Rhodes was also announced for a first time ever match against Kurt Angle for Northeast Wrestling on August 25th in Wiappingers Falls, NY. The dates for this year's BOLA have not yet been announced, however the tournament is usually held during late August/early September.

Bruce Tharpe visited the WWE Performance Centre on 7/6 and posed for quite a [picture](#) with Uncle Paul. [PWInsider](#) reported that WWE are interested in buying the Paul Boesch Houston Wrestling library which Tharpe currently owns the rights to and uses as part of the NWA's streaming service.

Indie Scene:



As noted in the Wrestling Observer this week, Moose's contract with ROH is up next month and the WWE are interested in bringing him in as part of the new class of recruits in September. Mike Johnson of PWInsider reported on 8/6 that Moose was actually backstage at the NXT TakeOver show in Orlando. Moose [Tweeted](#) on 8/6, “I will always have a special place in my heart for ROH,” which naturally led many people to speculate that he would be leaving the company soon. He is scheduled to appear at the 24/6 Best in the World PPV, but after that it is anybody's guess where he will end up. Meltzer also wrote in the Observer this week that Roderick Strong could also be on his way to NXT, as they will need to replenish the roster with talented new workers, however the situation is being kept “pretty quiet” for the time being.

Evolve have a double shot this weekend and as always you can order the iPPV and VOD from [WWNLive](#). Evolve 62 is 10/6 from the Orpheum in Ybor City, FL and the main event is Timothy Thatcher defending the Evolve Championship against Chris Hero. Other top matches include Drew Gulak & Tracy Williams defending the Evolve Tag Team titles against the Bravado Brothers and Johnny Gargano & TJP vs. Drew Galloway & EC3 in a non-sanctioned street fight. Also, Matt

Riddle takes on Cedric Alexander. Evolve 63 is 11/6 from Orlando, FL and the main event is a WWE Cruiserweight Flashpoint Elimination match: Johnny Gargano vs. Drew Gulak vs. TJP vs. Lince Dorado. Second from the top is Drew Galloway vs. Ethan Page in an anything goes match and EC3 has an open contract to face anyone on the Evolve roster. There is also a non-title match with Timothy Thatcher vs. Tracy Williams.

In more Evolve news, the company was set to make their Massachusetts debut on July 15th in Wakefield, MA, however “building issues” forced the show to be canceled. Evolve posted a [statement](#) on their website on 9/6 and announced that they had reached out to Beyond Wrestling and would work together to produce the “biggest day of independent wrestling in the New England area.” On July 17th, there will be two shows from Melrose Memorial Hall in Melrose, MA, with Beyond Wrestling running the building for an afternoon show at 2:30pm and Evolve putting on an evening show with a 7pm bell-time. Announced for the Beyond show: Chris Dickinson, Da Hit Squad (Dan Maff & Steve Mack), Matt Riddle, Tommaso Ciampa, Zack Sabre Jr & Veda Scott. The Evolve show will feature: Timothy Thatcher, Drew Gulak, Tracy Williams, Drew Galloway, Zack Sabre Jr, Marty Scurll, TJP, Matt Riddle, Cedric Alexander & Fred Yehi.

CZW's annual gore-fest and second biggest show of the year, Tournament of Death 15 is on 11/6 from its usual location in Townsend, DE on land owned by DJ Hyde's parents. Round one of the tourney sees:

- * **Fans Bring The Weapons:** Tim Donst vs Rickey Shane Page.
- * **Light Tube Death Match:** Alex Colon vs. Danny Havoc.
- * **Barbwire Madness:** MASADA vs. Conor Claxton.
- * **Home Run Derby Match:** Jeff Cannonball vs. Matt Tremont (2015 TOD winner).

There are some non-tournament matches, including Devon Moore vs. Dale Patricks in a Scaffold Match, DJ Hyde vs. Josh Crane in a Panes of Glass Death Match and Aaron Williams vs. Ron Mathis in a Rockstar Death Match. The show will not be available to stream live, however the VOD will be up within 24 hours on highspots.com.

TNA are running Slammiversary on 12/6 from the Impact Zone; I'm not going over the whole card, because really, who cares? Main event is Drew Galloway defending the TNA title against Bobby Lashley. Second from the top is Matt Hardy vs. Jeff Hardy in a Full Metal Mayhem match. The Hardy's have managed to create more buzz about their program than anything TNA has done in years with their utterly outlandish mini-movie set in Matt Hardy's palatial estate. If you have not seen the [wacky video](#), so yourselves a favour and check it out right now. Maria Kanellis posted on [Instagram](#) on 9/6 that she was unable to compete against Gail Kim due to a broken hand.

Japan:

At the age of 23, Will Ospreay became the youngest ever winner of the Best of the Super Juniors tournament when he defeated Ryusuke Taguchi in the final match on 7/6 in Sendai. With his victory, Ospreay also became the first English winner of the BOSJ and only the fifth gaijin in history to win either the Top of the Super Juniors or the Best of the Super Juniors tournament. The match with Taguchi was excellent and Ospreay clearly had something to prove to his critics by putting on a psychologically sound match which proved he does in fact know how to sell. This was also Taguchi's best match in years and he was super over as he is from Sendai. Finish saw Ospreay hit an Impodling Shooting Star Press and he got the win with OsCutter in 22:05 (***** ¼). Afterwards, Ospreay cut a promo and dedicated his victory to Kris Travis then called out Kushida to challenge

him for the IWGP Jr Heavyweight title.

Also on the show, Michael Elgin & Satoshi Kojima beat Kenny Omega & Bad Luck Fale in 11:43 when Elgin pinned Omega with the Elgin Bomb. Afterwards, Omega accepted Elgin's challenge to replace Tanahashi in the Ladder match at Dominion on 19/6. Los Ingobernables beat Chaos in 9:38 to set up Okada challenging Naito for the IWGP Heavyweight title at Dominion. Kushida, Ricochet & Matt Sydal beat Jushin Thunder Liger, Tiger Mask IV & Volador Jr. in 8:50 when Ricochet pinned Volador. Roppongi Vice & reDRagon came out and challenged Sydal & Ricochet for the IWGP Jr Tag titles, so it looks like another three-way at Dominion. Katsuyori Shibata & Juice Robinson beat Yuji Nagata & Manabu Nakanishi in 7:50 when Shibata pinned Nakanishi with the PK. Nagata & Shibata had a stare-down to set up the Never Openweight title rematch.



The full card for Dominion was announced this week for 19/6 at Osaka-Jo Hall.

- * **Jay White Send-Off Match:** Jay White, Juice Robinson & David Finlay vs. Hiroyoshi Tenzan, Satoshi Kojima & Manabu Nakanishi.
- * Togi Makabe, Yoshitatsu & Captain New Japan vs. Bad Luck Fale, Yujiro Takahashi & “Hangman” Adam Page.
- * Tomohiro Ishii & Yoshi-Hashi vs. Sanada & Bushi.
- * Hirooki Goto vs. Evil,
- * **IWGP Jr Tag Team Championship Four-way:** Ricochet & Matt Sydal (C) vs. The Young Bucks vs. Roppongi Vice vs. reDRagon.
- * **IWGP Jr Heavyweight Championship:** Kushida (C) vs. Will Ospreay.
- * **IWGP Tag Team Championship:** Tama Tonga & Tanga Roa (C) vs. Mark & Jay Briscoe.
- * **NEVER Openweight Championship:** Yuji Nagata (C) vs. Katsuyori Shibata.
- * **IWGP IC Championship Ladder Match:** Kenny Omega (C) vs. Michael Elgin.
- * **IWGP Heavyweight Championship:** Tetsuya Naito (C) vs. Kazuchika Okada.

Kota Ibushi and the Great Sasuke were announced for the big Pro Wrestling Love, Wrestle-1 vs. All Japan show in Yokohama on August 11th. The only match announced for the card so far is a six-man

tag featuring Keiji Mutoh vs. Jun Akiyama on opposite sides of the ring for the first time in over three years; their partners have yet to be announced, although it is believed that Ibushi & Sasuke could be put in the match. We'll have plenty more on this big show in the coming weeks when more matches are announced.

All Japan have a solid looking card lined up for Korakuen Hall on 15/6. Only four matches have been announced, but it still looks like it should be a good show.

* Jun Akiyama & Yuma Aoyagi vs. Konosuke Takeshita (DDT KO-D Champion)& Tetsuya Endo.

* Ryoji Sai & Jake Lee vs. Shuji Ishikawa & Masashi Takeda.

* **World Tag Championship Match:** Zeus & The Bodyguard vs. Daisuke Sekimoto & Yuji Okabayashi (C) .

* **Triple Crown Heavyweight Championship Match:** Kentaro Miyahara (C) vs. Kengo Mashimo.

Mexico:

The Lucha Libre World Cup was won by Team Lucha Underground (Johnny Mundo, Brain Cage & Chavo Guerrero Jr) on 4/6 when they beat Team AAA (Pentagon Jr, Psycho Clown & Texano Jr) in the final in Mexico City. Team AAA of Lady Apache, Faby Apache & Mary Apache won the women's block by beating Team Japan (Aja Kong, Yuki Miyazaki, Natsu Sumire) in the final. The gimmick for the tournament was that all matches had a ten minute time limit and in the case of a draw it came down to sudden death single matches with five minute time limits. The men's final went the ten minutes then Texano & Chavo Jr fought to a five minute draw and Psycho Clown & Cage did the same. It came down to Mundo against Pentagon and Mundo pinned him in 4:12 with the End of the World after some interference from Cage & Chavo. The women's final also went the full ten minutes then Kong & Faby Apache went to a five minute draw before Mari Apache pinned Miyazaki with a Michinoku Driver at 3:40 of the second sudden death period. Team International of Rey Mysterio Jr, Dragon Azteca & Dr Wagner Jr won the third place play-off match over Team NOAH of Naomichi Marufuji, Maybach Taniguchi & Taiji Ishimori. Team Canada (Allie, KC Spinelli & Taya) won the women's third place match over Team USA (Santana Garrett, Cheerleader Melissa & Sienna).

CMLL's International Gran Prix was announced for [iPPV](#) on July 1st and will feature some international talent, as well as some CMLL regulars. Maximo Sexy, Diamante Azul, Mephisto, Rey Escorpion, Rush, Shocker, Ultimo Guerrero & Volador Jr are the Mexican contingent for the tournament and the international names appearing are: Sam Elias (the brother of Corey Graves), Michael Elgin, Johnny Idol, Kushida, Marco Corleone, Okumura, Tama Tonga & Tanga Loa. They have also been building to big matches with Rey Cometa vs. Barbaro Cavernario for the hair and Pierroth vs. La Mascara for the masks, however you would think they would save the latter until the Anniversary show in September.

Dragon Lee posted a video on [Facebook](#) this week and announced he will be out for 6-8 weeks. He [said](#) in the video that he had a partially ruptured tendon and the doctors wanted to operate on him but he would rather rest and rehab the knee. Last time he injured his knee, Lee ignored the doctors' advice to rest for at least a month and a half and returned within three weeks; instantly re-injuring his knee in his first match back.

Ratings:

RAW on 6/6 did a 2.27 rating with 3,240,000 viewers, up slightly from the 2.19 and 3,222,000 last

week. pm did 3,371,000. 9pm (with Cena/Styles) did 3,490,000 and 10pm fell to an astonishingly low 2,903,000.

TNA iMPACT on 7/6 did 326,000 viewers for the Slammiversary go-home show, down from the 346,000 last week.

Lucha Underground on 8/6 appeared to take a big hit going head-to-head with NXT TakeOver and they did 85,000 viewers for the first run airing.

SmackDown on 9/6 did a 1.51 rating with 1,996,000 viewers, down from the 2,169,000 the show did last week.

The 3/6 RAW replay on Sy-Fy did 446,000 viewers.

NXT TV Taping Results from June 9th:

It is unclear how many episodes of TV they will get out of what they taped, as they actually only need two shows worth of material before the next tapings, which will take place after the first night of the Cruiserweight Classic tapings on 24/6.

(1) Authors of Pain w/Paul Ellering squashed Sean Swags & CJ O'Doyle. (2) Carmella tapped out Tessa Blanchard. (3) TM61 over Blake & Murphy. (4) Andrade Almas pinned Tye Dillinger after the knees in the corner. They set up a Finn Balor vs. Nakamura match with an in-ring face-off; no word on when the match will take place. (5) Ember Moon (Athena) over Mandy Rose. (6) Oney Lorcan (Biff Busick) beat Tye Dillinger. (7) No Way Jose beat Josh Woods. Afterwards, Austin Aries came out and attacked Jose. (8) Bayley downed Deonna Purazzo. (9) Nia Jax squashed Liv Morgan. (10) Shinsuke Nakamura beat Buddy Murphy. (11) Alexa Bliss beat Carmella. (12) Andrade Almas over Noah Keko. (13) Johnny Gargano & Tommaso Ciampa beat the Hype Bros. Gargano & Ciampa challenged American Alpha for the Tag titles and Alpha came out and accepted. Authors of Pain showed up and laid out AA again. (14) NXT Champion Samoa Joe downed Oney Lorcan in a non-title match.

RAW Ramblings – June 6th 2016

Chesapeake Energy Centre: Oklahoma City, OK.

Ben Carass.

RAW was much better than last week. Not exactly high praise since that show was one the worst RAWs of all-time, but at least this week the show was not offensively terrible. The best thing on the show was once again the stuff with **John Cena & AJ Styles** setting up their match at Money in the Bank. There was also some paint-by-numbers booking for the six guys in the MITB Ladder Match; it was perfectly fine but didn't exactly set the world on fire. We also got a show-long storyline of an old, bumbling, incompetent **Teddy Long** showing up at random points to purposely flub lines and to politic for the role of SmackDown GM. He eventually got the **Stephanie McMahon** Special and **Steph** kicked him out of the building because **Vince** didn't want a senile old fool running the show. – I know some of our American cousins struggle with the concept of irony, but **Vince McMahon** not wanting an out of touch, senile old man in charge of his television show is about as ironic as it gets.

John Cena was out at the top of the second hour and he compared the moment with **AJ Styles** last week to the first time he went face-to-face with the **Rock**. He begged the fans to do the dueling

chants gimmick then demanded **AJ** come out and explain his actions last week. **Styles & the Club** hit the stage and **AJ** cut one of the best promos of his entire career, which is funny because I'm sure everybody said he couldn't talk. **Styles** told **Cena** he offended him every time he stepped into the ring and said that **Cena** couldn't beat him on his best day. **Cena** replied that **Styles** had 15 years to come up with some better material but all he had was the same old deal about him not being a good wrestler. **Cena** laid into **Styles** and flat-out called him a failure for not beating **Roman Reigns**. He also used the term, "**Bullet Club**" at one point. **Styles** fired back and declared that he could go anywhere in the world and sell it out then said he had nothing to lose against **Cena**, which made him extremely dangerous. **Styles** noted that guys like **Cena** "buried" guys like him and said that the **Club** were there to keep his head above the ground. **The Club** eventually surrounded **Cena** in the ring, but the **New Day** ran down to make the save and the **Club** backed down. This set up a trios main event with the **Club** against the **New Day**. **The Club** jumped **New Day** before the bell and **Xavier Woods** ended up being taken to the back after he ate a **Styles Clash** on the floor. Match turned into a 3-on-2 Handicap and the **Club** got the win in 5:10 when **Styles** pinned **Kofi** with the Phenomenal Forearm. Post-match saw the **Club** beat up **New Day** some more until **Cena** made the save and **Styles** bailed to the floor. **Gallows** took an AA and **Cena** stood tall with **Kofi & Big E** to close the show. – This was all really solid stuff, with the highlight being the promo exchange between **Cena & Styles**.



Show opened with a wacky segment involving the six guys in the MITB Ladder Match. All six guys were on top of ladders in the ring and they essentially just went back-and-forth with short promos for a while. **Kevin Owens** was easily the stand out, although **Sami Zayn & Chris Jericho** had a cute little bit about **Jericho** claiming to have won a MITB match and **Sami** pointing out he was lying. The segment really shouldn't have worked, but everybody was on-point with their delivery and the crowd were into it so it was much better than it had any right to be. **Teddy Long** showed up and did his blithering idiot routine and intentionally flubbed a bunch of lines. **Stephanie** came out and said that **Shane** was "on vacation" then booked the six guys in matches against each other. **Cesaro** submitted **Chris Jericho** with the Sharpshooter at 12:01 of a solid TV match. **Alberto Del Rio** pinned **Sami Zayn** clean as a sheet with the Tree of Woe Double Stomp in a nothing 8:20 match. **Dean Ambrose** then downed **Kevin Owens** in another skippable affair in 6:35 with the

Dirty Deeds DDT. Afterwards, **Ambrose** set up a ladder and went up to touch the briefcase; **Owens** recovered and shoved him off then pointed at the case and yelled it was his. – The fact that **Owens** had been pretty much protected until the last couple of weeks when he suddenly started losing matches surely makes him the favourite to win the briefcase.

There was yet another horrible segment involving the women, more specifically **Charlotte**, who came out with **Dana Brooke** and for some reason apologised for what she said to **Ric Flair** last week. **Natalya & Becky Lynch** showed up and they tried to convince **Dana** she would be better off without **Charlotte**. **Dana** pretended to think about it for a while then she attacked **Nattie** from behind. **Becky** tripped over **Nattie** while she tried to get to **Dana**; it looked terrible. **Dana** gave **Becky** the **Michinoku Driver** while **Charlotte** put **Nattie** in the Figure-Eight. – SummerSlam cannot come quickly enough, because they need to get the women's title of **Charlotte** as soon as possible.



Everything Else: They did some tributes to **Muhammad Ali** throughout the night; there were some lame Tweet montages, but they did follow up with a really cool video. **Enzo Amore & Big Cass** paid tribute to **Ali** before their match with the **Vaudevillains** and **Enzo** did **Ali's** entire “I’m so mean I make medicine sick” promo. Match was a lame rehash of what happened at Payback. **English** tossed **Enzo** into the ropes just like he did before and **Enzo** sold like death even though he came nowhere near the ropes this time. **Big Cass** went crazy and got DQ’d for kicking too much ass after seeing the **Vaudes** trying to injury his buddy. **Rusev** beat **Jack Swagger** via count-out in 3:35; **Titus O’Neil** was on commentary and was horrible. They appeared to be setting up a three-way for the PPV; poor **Rusev**, in a feud with **Titus O’Neil & Jack Swagger**. The **Bob Backlund/Darren Young** gimmick this week was that **Backlund** wanted **Young** to walk 8 hours to the next town. The **Shining Stars** did a promo in front of a green-screen; they still like Puerto Rico. **Tyler Breeze vs. R-Truth** went to a no-contest in 1:01 when **Goldust & Fandango** fought into the ring; **Teddy Long** showed up and tried to book a tag match but security took him away. There was also funny inset promo with **Breeze** shaving **Fandango's** back; they are quickly turning into a great comedy heel team.

And that was the show...not much to it really. Next week is the go-home for Money in the Bank, so maybe they were saving the best stuff for that, however I somehow doubt it.



NXT TakeOver: The End – June 8th 2016

Full Sail University: Winter Park, FL.

Ben Carass.

It is probably worth mentioning again that NXT is not coming to an end. In fact if you saw **Uncle Paul's** post-show interview with **Cathy Kelly**, you heard the “news” that “the End” moniker was a reference to the end of NXT as developmental and the start of a new, fully-fledged third brand. Whether that comes to fruition or if an actual new developmental league Evolves remains to be seen, however it appears that the main roster brand split has already begun to have an effect on the NXT product and business model.

If we are grading The End on a curve against previous TakeOver specials, it undoubtedly was towards the lower end of the spectrum in terms of the overall show quality. Still, the amount of negativity this show received online is utterly baffling and there seemed to be a number of people upset by the fact that they didn't get another blow-away show like Brooklyn or Dallas. There may have been nothing at the level of **Sasha/Bayley** or **Nakamura/Zayn**, but absolutely none of the matches on the show were bad and we did in fact get one excellent match with **American Alpha** surprisingly dropping the Tag Team titles to **The Revival**. **Samoa Joe** retained the NXT title over **Finn Balor** and they managed to have a very good Cage Match even with all the restrictions like the no blood and the escape the cage rule, which has been around for over thirty years and is still stupid. **Shinsuke Nakamura** downed **Austin Aries** in what was nowhere near either man's best performance and it is completely understandable that a lot of people were disappointed in the match. Not in this, or any other, universe was it a bad match, but they never really got out of third gear and it certainly didn't come across like a big-time dream match that it was hyped as. The debut of **Andrade “Cien” Almas** was perfectly fine and he beat **Tye Dillinger**, however it also could have been much better and having seen plenty of **La Sombra**, he barely displayed 1% of what he is actually capable of. **Asuka** also managed to drag **Nia Jax** through the best match of her career and

retained the Women's title.

With **Balor** failing to regain the NXT title and **American Alpha** dropping the Tag belts, it would certainly appear like they are main roster bound. They did shoot an angle after the Tag title match and introduced some new monster heels, who left **American Alpha** laying. Nobody had a clue who the two guys were and the fans chanted, "Who are you?!" They were **Sunny Dhinsa & Gzim Selmani**, the **Authors of Pain** and **Paul Ellering** of all people came out on the ramp to stand with the latest attempt to recreate the **Road Warriors** here in 2016. It is likely that **Alpha** and maybe even **Balor** shoot some stuff at the NXT TV Tapings on 9/6 to tie up any loose ends. **Alpha** could conceivably even put the **Authors of Pain** over on their way out.



One thing that did hurt the show was Full Sail itself. The NXT crowd is very divisive and many people find the fans at Full Sail to be nothing but a bunch of hipster millennials who try and get themselves over with their wacky chants and post-ironic support for certain performers. Others just see a lively crowd having fun and making a bunch of noise at a pro wrestling show, which is certainly better than the majority of the RAW crowds that come across like they have been shot up with a bunch of tranquilizers before the show starts. I'm somewhere in the middle on the argument, in that fans should in no way try and make the show all about themselves, however I would take an audience making a bunch of noise over a dead crowd all day long. Regardless of your personal opinion on the Full Sail crowd, the small 300 seat building just could not produce the same "big show" feel as some of TakeOver shows that were held in bigger arenas. If NXT really is going to become the third brand then maybe reserving TakeOver specials for bigger arenas and only using Full Sail for TV tapings is the way to go.

Andrade "Cien" Almas vs. Tye Dillinger. – **Almas** over in 5:25. **Dillinger** was super over with the fans to the point where a lot of them didn't really care about **Almas**, although there was an, "He's one hundred" chant for "**Cien**." **Dillinger** took most of the match. **Almas** did his double Moonsault after landing in the ring after the first one. Finish saw **Almas** win with his running doubles knees in

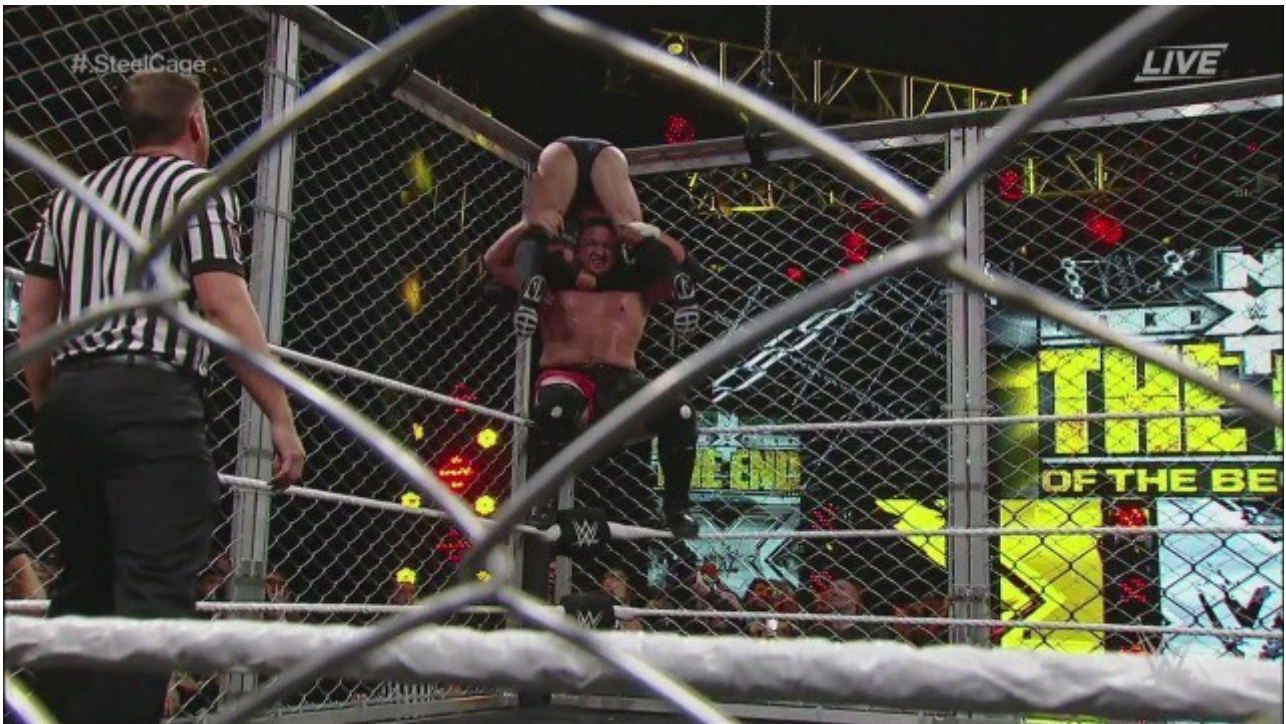
the corner. – **Dillinger** was not the best choice as **Almas'** first opponent. He's a perfectly good hand, but the crowd are into him in that weird post-ironic sort of way and cheer him no matter what. The goal was to get **Almas** over as a big deal, but the crowd were more interested in chanted “Ten” for **Dillinger**. (**)



NXT Tag Team Championship: American Alpha (C) vs. The Revival. – **Revival** became the new champions at 15:45. What a match this was. Story was that **Dash & Dawson** knew they couldn't out-wrestle the champs, so they started out throwing fists and tried to turn it into a brawl. **Alpha** managed to use their wrestling anyway and they did a couple of really awesome synchronized spots early that brought the crowd to its feet. **Revival** got the heat on **Gable** after a double team Hot Shot; **Gable** got some good hope spots, including an Armbar while upside down in the ropes. **Jordan** ran wild off the hot tag and threw **Dash & Dawson** around with some great Suplexes. Heels cut off **Jordan** and **Gable** got the chance to make a big comeback and they did a bunch of tremendous near-falls for both teams. Finish saw the **Revival** counter the Grand Amplitude and hit **Jordan** with the Shatter Machine for the clean pin. As noted, **Sunny Dhinsa & Gzim Selmani** attacked **American Alpha** and left them for dead then **Paul Ellering** came out to stand with his new team. – I liked this match a little more than their Dallas match, although the one thing this was missing was the rabid Dallas crowd. Match itself was a perfect example of how tag team wrestling is done. (****)

Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Austin Aries. – **Nakamura** over in 17:03. Good match, but not in the same league as the **Zayn** match in Dallas. **Aries** had his ribs tapped up for some reason that was never fully explained, nor did it pay into the match in anyway. They worked a pretty slow pace, with **Aries** getting a lot of offense and he hit a Dragon Screw and worked over the knee briefly. **Aries** turned his attention to the neck and began to work it over to soften **Nakamura** up for the Last Chancery. **Aries** hit his Heat-seeker Tope and got a near-fall, but **Nakamura** caught him in a Triangle. **Aries** countered the Kinshasa with a Knee Crusher and a Back Suplex, which impacted both the knee and the neck of **Nakamura**. **Aries** got the Last Chancery, but **Nakamura** got to the ropes then after some back-and-forth **Aries** hit **Nakamura** with a Death Valley Driver on the apron. Finish saw **Aries** go for another Heat-seeker Tope, but **Nakamura** moved and he crashed into the

barricade. **Nakamura** followed up with a knee off the second rope, the Reverse Powerslam and the Kinshasa for the win. – Story they tried to tell was that **Aries** brought his best and one mistake cost him the victory. A fine idea on paper to protect **Aries**, however as a result the match lacked any real intensity and came nowhere near the same levels of drama that **Nakamura & Zayn** reached. Still, a very solid match. (***) ½)



NXT Women's Championship: Asuka (C) vs. Nia Jax. – **Asuka** retained in 9:10. They kept this short, which was a smart move. Story was basically **Jax** being a monster and **Asuka** trying a bunch of submissions which didn't work. **Jax** bent **Asuka** around the ring post during the heat and did a couple of basic power moves. **Jax** missed her Leg Drop of Doom and **Asuka** made her comeback with a fiery flurry of strikes. **Jax** hit a Powerbomb for a near-fall but **Asuka** turned it into an Armbar, which **Jax** ultimately powered out of. **Asuka** struggled to get the **Asuka** Lock on the monster and **Jax** powered out again. Finish saw **Asuka** land a series of kicks to the head to get the pin; **Jax** sold like she was KO'd and the trainer ran out to check on her afterwards. – They protected **Nia** and hid her greenness very well and the story of her being too big and powerful to be submitted is kind of cool. Although the fact that **Asuka** knocked out the giant doesn't do much for her status as the monster of the women's division. **Asuka** came off strong though and deserves a lot of credit for the match being as good as it was. (***)

NXT Championship, Steel Cage Match: Samoa Joe (C) vs. Finn Balor. – **Joe** retained in 16:09. Very good cage match for 2016 WWE standards. **Joe** tossed **Balor** into the cage early on and tried to win this heated blood feud by escaping out of the door. **Balor** tried to escape too, but **Joe** gave him a nice German Suplex and continued to control things. **Balor** countered the Muscle Buster and ended up hitting a Slingblade off the top rope for a near-fall. **Joe** hit the Muscle Buster about at about 11:30 but **Balor** kicked out and the announcers played it up like a big deal. **Balor** sent **Joe** into the cage and made his comeback with a bunch of Slingblades and Dropkicks. **Joe** kicked-out of the Double Foot Stomp and applied the Coquina Clutch, but **Balor** broke free and went to escape over the top of the cage. Finish saw both men fighting on the top rope and **Joe** sent **Balor's** face into the cage then he hit a massive Muscle Buster off the second rope to retain the strap. – With the obvious restrictions of a WWE cage match, this match wasn't quite as good as their two previous

TakeOver matches, although as noted they did about as good a job as possible at delivering a good cage match in 2016. Clearly **Balor** is main roster bound, but **Samoa Joe** absolutely should be right behind him because they are going to need all the talent they can get when the brand split goes into effect. (***) $\frac{3}{4}$)



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