

# WWE NXT 12/9: Proving Grounds



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They say the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Well, the road from NXT War Games has a lot of injuries. Candice LeRae, Dakota Kai, and Bobby Fish to be exact. We only have a month until New Years Evil, and there are a lot of moving parts to be set. Let's take a look with some quick thoughts.

- Finn Balor is back with a new set of challengers. To have Pete Dunne come out first was a great touch. After all, he's a former NXT UK champion himself. It's about time that they moved Damian Priest up from the North American title muck. He's ready as he's shown consistently. I had a feeling that even with coming out to confront Gargano and Theory, there would be someone to prevent that. Kyle O'Reilly is a no-brainer. He took Balor to the brink and should definitely be in line for a rematch. Enter Karrion Kross. He made his return tonight regarding Priest's not so kind words to Scarlett.

There has to be a way to pair this list down heading into NYE. They could do Kross/Priest and O'Reilly/Dunne next week. That would reacclimate Kross back to NXT and continue the small feuds these men have. There's also (and I'm sure they are going to go with this) a fatal four-way match between Kross, O'Reilly, Dunne, and Priest to see who is going to get the first crack at Balor.

- Speaking of challengers, the women division has them in abundance. Raquel Gonzalez picked up another win in a good main event with Ember Moon. Toni Storm and Io Shirai got into a backstage brawl — these two are not strangers to each other. In a division where Shirai has been invincible, it's important to note that Storm has bested her in the 2018 Mae Young Classic finals. For Gonzalez, there's one more roadblock in her way — Rhea Ripley. She lost to her previously in a singles match and if she wants a shot at Shirai at NYE, Gonzalez is going to have to conquer that demon. You can hold off Storm/Shirai until down the road.
- I like that Johnny Gargano has taken to the aura of the cocky, corny heel. Austin Theory's role — that's something we'll have to get used to overtime (and looks like he may have to). I was wondering who would be the next challenger regarding that NXT North American title. To my delight, KUSHIDA steps up to be Leon Ruff's partner next week. It is long overdue for KUSHIDA to be in the title picture in NXT. He has history beating Austin Theory. Think of the quality of matches he can have with Gargano.
- The business between Tomasso Ciampa and Timothy Thatcher isn't over. I could see a rematch at NYE that will be an attachment to their brutal match this past Sunday. With another loss under his belt, what is the overall end game for Cameron Grimes?
- Jake Atlas has won his last two NXT matches as he's gaining momentum for another chance to get to Santos Escobar. What happened after the match was intriguing — a hint at an Isiah 'Swerve' Scott heel turn maybe? Who is going to be the one to impede the dominance of Legado del Fantasma in that cruiserweight division?
- Glad to see the Grizzled Young Vets pick up another win in a revamped tag division in NXT. They should get a title match with Burch and Lorcan very soon. Also liked how Ever Rise was used in this match. So close, so sneaky, but no cigar.
- Malcolm Bivens sighting! Boa and Xia Li are going through it. Who is that mysterious presence? No Adam Cole, Roderick Strong, or Dexter Lumis tonight.

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