

NXT Takeover: Stand and Deliver Night One Review: 'A Changing of the Guard'



Photo Credit: WWE YouTube – <https://youtu.be/1BPKx8JK0EI>

It's the last **NXT Takeover** of the Wednesday night era. The black and gold brand will move to Tuesday nights next week. The *Takeovers* on *WrestleMania* weekend always hint at a paradigm shift within the brand. There's so much talent and with *Mania* taking two nights, it made sense to spread *Takeover* across Wednesday and Thursday. Hence, we have *NXT Takeover: Stand and Deliver Night One*. Let's not waste any more time and get into things.

Zoey Stark vs. Toni Storm: Even though her previous matches with **Io Shirai**, **Dakota Kai**, and **Raquel Gonzalez** have resulted in losing efforts, **Zoey Stark** is a wrestler that **NXT** is high on. They are positioning her to gain some stream and be one of the standout babyfaces of the brand in time. **Toni Storm** works heel-style offense early, looking to ground Stark. Stark would have little spurts of offense until Storm would cut her off.

The finish looked a little disjointed, but the logic was smart. If you don't want Stark to kick out of Storm Zero, then Storm not being able to hit it at all makes sense. A roll-up win allows Stark to get a big first win, and if they want this feud to continue, it gives room for that to happen.

Pete Dunne vs. Kushida: This match is a classic example of where you let two superb wrestlers do what they do best — wrestle. Doesn't really need a story behind it. They will tell it in the ring. Dunne has worn the moniker of "the best technical wrestler in the world" as of late. Who is better to challenge than Kushida — a man who is not too shabby in technical work himself. What I like about this match is the structure. While Dunne does for chain wrestling and submissions early, he mixes it up with a lot of his "bruiserweight" striking. Dunne targets the fingers early, and they would eventually circle back to that with the finish.

Kushida alters his offense to be a more hard-hitting, quick, and high impact. He doesn't go for the Hoverboard Lock and subsequent armbars until later in the match when he wears Dunne down. Limb targeting would be a theme of two of the major singles matches on this card. Dunne quickly goes for the fingers and hits *The Bitter End*. It was an outstanding start to *NXT Takeover*. This match provided a distinct flavor and pace to what we would see the rest of the night.

Leon Ruff vs. Isaiah "Swerve" Scott vs. Bronson Reed vs. Cameron Grimes vs. Dexter Lumis vs. LA Knight (Gauntlet Eliminator): *NXT* multi-man matches always try to have moments where each of the wrestlers has their own standout moment. Swerve added some legitimacy to his heel turn lasting all the way until the end. LA Knight had a flurry that will lead him into the crosshairs of Dexter Lumis. The beginning of the match was slower as the heel alliance between Scott and Grimes ran rough shot. Once everyone came out, it picked up with eliminations.

Bronson Reed looked like the dominant force that they've been teasing for a while. It was a great choice for him to win as it presents a unique challenge for **Johnny Gargano**. What is Gargano going to do to neutralize Reed's size? Not to mention, Reed is also agile. Gargano's North American title reign has been fun with including *The Way*. But, if you want to crown a new force, Reed should pick up the win on night two.

WALTER vs. Tommaso Ciampa (NXT UK Championship): The booking went in a way where it seemed like WALTER had a real chance of losing. Sometimes, he exploited the size difference between him and Ciampa. Ciampa would stand in front of him mono-e-mono and get a chop or a boot for his services. They placed a lot of emphasis upon 'the chop' or the right hand of WALTER. Once WALTER hurt it, the tide changed. Ciampa teased trying to pick WALTER up early in the match, and was able to do it multiple times towards the end. He beat WALTER up at his own game with his own strikes.

They made Ciampa look formidable to WALTER's dominance. Almost like WALTER's previous match with Tyler Bate. He eventually got a lot of powerful moves off in their championship match as well. However, Ciampa ran through a chop. While it was weakened, it felt like a big deal. There may be some who were puzzled by the finish. Why didn't WALTER do the big splash off the top or another powerbomb? WALTER had to pull it together in order to land his more brutal move. This match has a hard case of being the standout of night one.

MSK vs. Grizzled Young Veterans vs. Legado Del Fantasma (Tag Team Championship): MSK and the Young Vets know each other very well from the *Dusty Classic* final. The match would end with that theme as well. As commentary noted, perhaps everybody was overlooking the Legado Del Fantasma team of **Wilde** and **Mendoza**. When they had their chances, they looked great. In order to build the babyface momentum, MSK worked a lot from underneath until **Wes Lee** had a big flurry.

Grizzled Young Veterans showed why they are one of the best tag teams in the WWE. They were dominant and sneaky when they needed to be. **Gibson** and **Drake** may have not gotten the win this time, but gold is certainly in their future down the road. MSK's arrival to *NXT* was the injection of energy that the men's tag team division needed. They will make great champions and their style will create an uptick in match quality with whoever they face.

NXT Takeover Stand and Deliver Night One Main Event: Io Shirai vs. Raquel Gonzalez (NXT Women's Championship): Before going into this match, one has to remember that the only person that has pinned Io Shirai during her championship reign was Raquel Gonzalez. It was at *NXT: War Games 2020*, so there has been a long game in positioning her as the top heel. The only way that Shirai was going to beat Gonzalez was with her speed and agility. Besides some spots where Gonzalez got to show some of her power, Shirai let out a barrage. Hurricanranas, moonsaults, a 619 — all the brilliance that we've known her for. Even a huge cross body off of the 'Deadly Game'-like skull. A call back to her aerial assaults at *In Your House* and *War Games*.

Gonzalez kicking out of Shirai's moonsault was big because nobody had before. After that, the end of Shirai's title reign was quick. They didn't prolong a beating where Gonzalez got a lot of offense. She did a single-arm bomb on the outside, one more move, then a single-arm bomb in the ring. That is how you build a formidable heel champion. Make them withstand everything that the champion has in their toolbox. Then shut the door quick.

Murjani's Post Game Thoughts on NXT Takeover: Stand and Deliver Night One:

1. **Charlotte Flair**. **Rhea Ripley** (twice). **Candice LeRae** (twice). **Tegan Nox**. Toni Storm. **Mercedes Martinez**. That's who Io Shirai has beaten in her 304-day reign as *NXT Women's Champion*. Even though it occurred in the 'pandemic' era of wrestling, Io Shirai has distinguished herself as one of the best wrestlers in the world. *NXT* has made their titleholders in the women's division feel important throughout the brand's history.

Now, there's a matter of Shirai's future. Many people would immediately point to Monday nights, and they could use a new infusion of talent. *RAW*'s fundamental problem is booking choices. There's no use moving someone as special as Shirai and just have her wade in the malaise of bad booking. Plus, there are some familiar faces for her, like Rhea Ripley, Charlotte Flair, and **Shayna Baszler**. Fresher matchups on *Smackdown* might be the better move if you don't shift the rosters around a bit.

If she stays in *NXT*, they have an absurdly stacked women's division. She can get the rematch with Raquel Gonzalez, which she would presumably lose. Then what? You don't want to position Io as just another face, and while staying is an option, the main roster shows need her more.

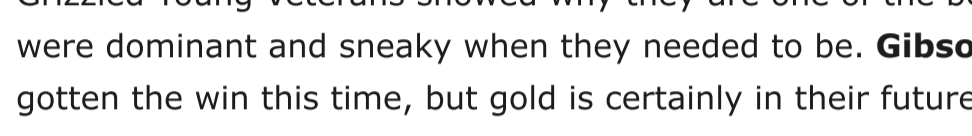
2. I do not know who beats WALTER for the *NXT UK* title and good luck to those who challenge for it.

3. Night two's co-main event is going to be interesting because of the directions the brand can go. You can give **Karrion Kross** back the title that he never lost. That's definitely a decision you can make. However, there's a money match in both **Kyle O'Reilly** and **Finn Balor** winning their respective matches.

O'Reilly/Balor III for the *NXT Championship* is big time. You have O'Reilly coming off a big win over his long-time rival **Adam Cole**. Then looking to challenge the man he's never beaten. I feel as though Kross's future either lives on *RAW* or *Smackdown*. You can still get juice out of Balor's title run as he's running on another level currently.

NXT Takeover: Stand and Deliver Night One is now streaming on [Peacock](#).

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Journalist, Self-published author of five books, podcast host, and photographer since 2014. Murjani Rawls has been stretching the capabilities of his creativity and passions, Rawls has as a portfolio spanning through many mediums including music, television, movies, and more. Operating out of the New York area, Rawls has photographed over 200+ artists spanning many genres, written over 700 articles ranging displaying his passionate aspirations to keep evolving as his years in media continue.

