

# WWE NXT 09/16: Welcome To The Ball Pit



Murjani Rawls [Follow](#)

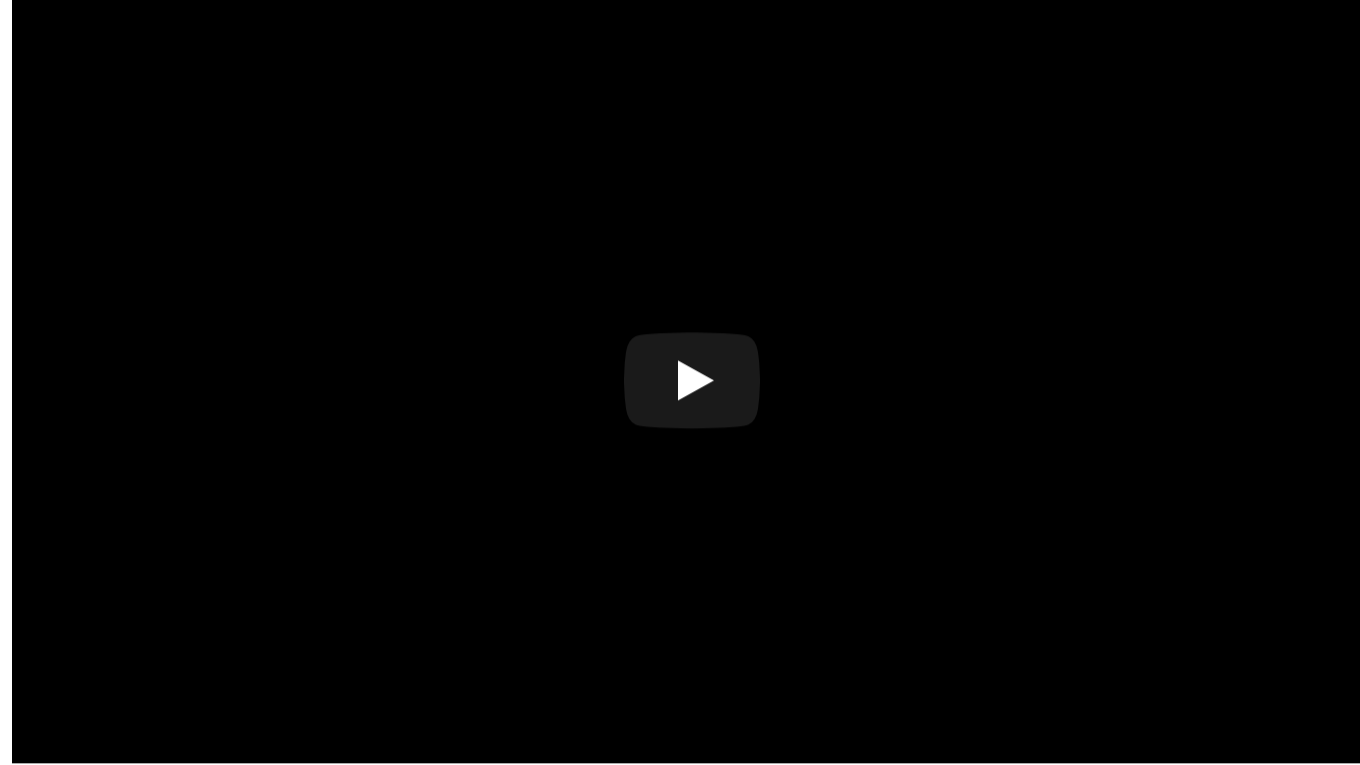
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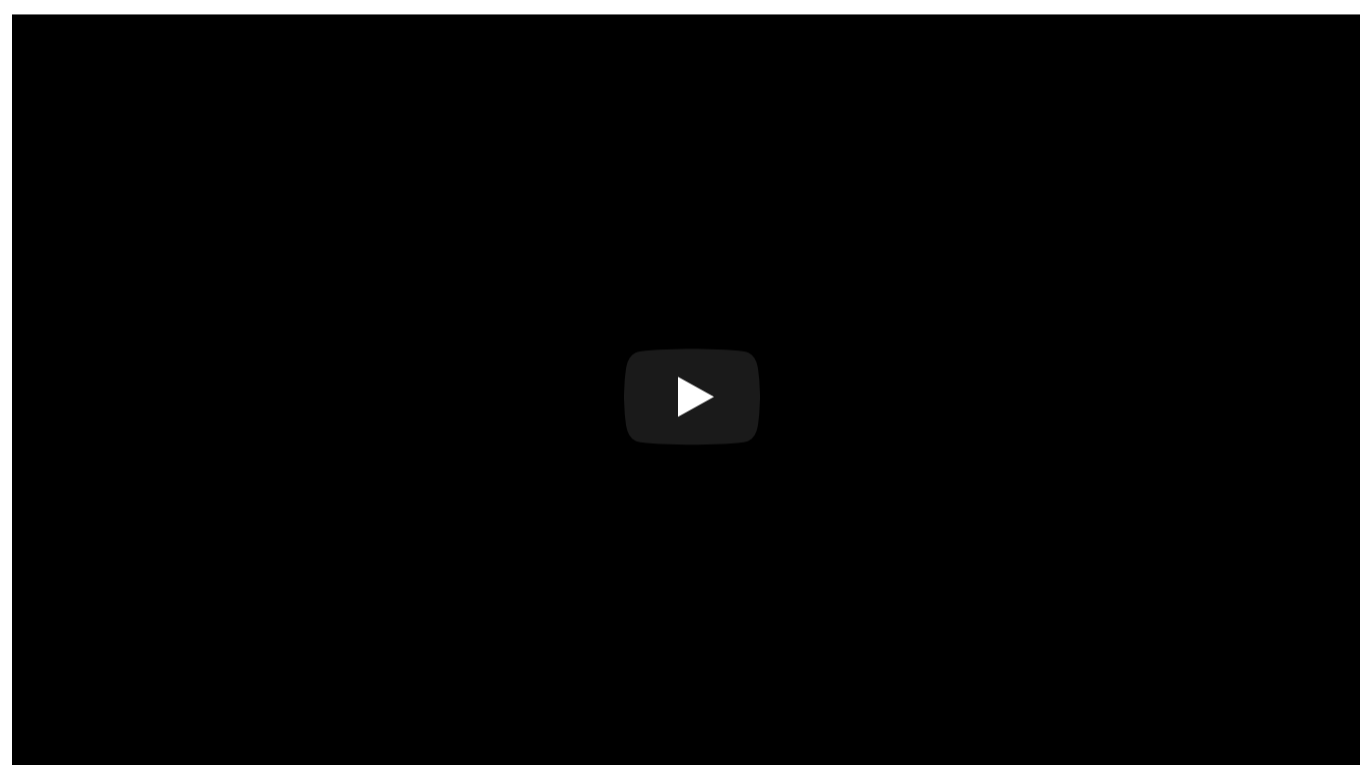
Last week's SUPER TUESDAY episode gave us a new champion and king of the castle, **Finn Balor**. This week gave us the building blocks as we head towards an October Takeover (crosses fingers for a Halloween Havoc theme).

If you don't know by now, **Shotzi Blackheart** is a star. It's an embarrassment of riches in the NXT Women's division, and the non-title match between **Io Shirai** and Blackheart was another example of that. They both had to work out the timing in the beginning, and once they got through the submission holds, it was off to the races. NXT does these 'auditions' where they will put a rising star against the champion to see how they do. Kudos to Blackheart for showing her promise and to Shirai in both keeping herself looking strong and helping elevate Blackheart.



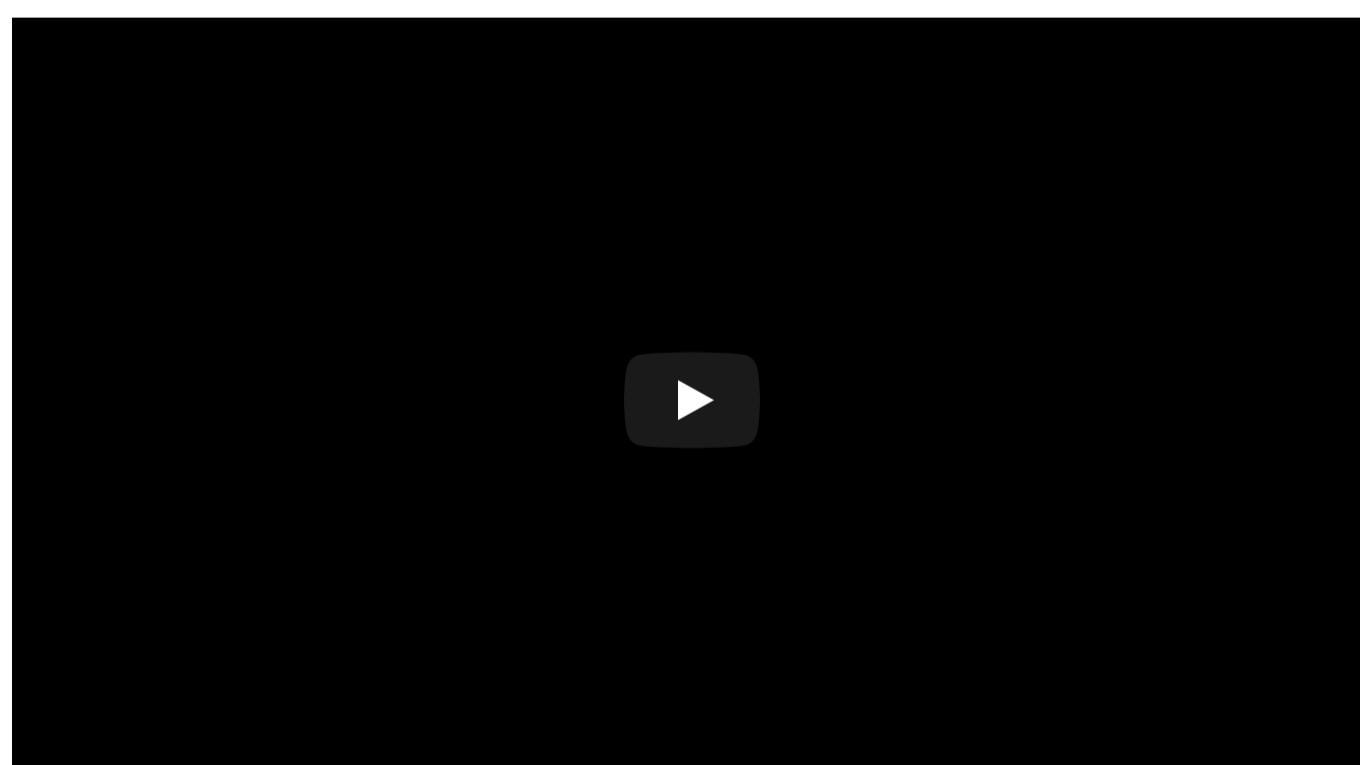
I'm excited about the women's battle royale for the number one contendership because there are so many possibilities. That's a testament to the great job NXT has done building feuds and featuring more than one women's match on their show. Shotzi Blackheart just had a competitive match against Io. **Dakota Kai** is looking to get another crack at Io Shirai. You have the **Tegan Nox/Candace LeRae** feud. **Rhea Ripley** is back on a roll after the cage match win against **Mercedes Martinez**. Not to mention, **Xia Li** maybe looking to imbue a little edge to her character. This is how you build up challengers and get fans to look forward to a battle royale property.

**Tomasso Ciampa** is back to his blackheart ways with a squash win against **Desmond Troy**. Jake Atlas makes a stand to avenge the beat down he suffered — it will be a good feature for him next week. But NXT is burying the lede with the interaction with **Kyle O' Reilly** later in the night. If you are not familiar with his singles matches in Ring of Honor or New Japan, look them up. O' Reilly has been featured mostly in a tag capacity in NXT. Here's hoping we see the beginning of a proper singles run for him.



What has gotten into **KUSHIDA**? Better yet, thank you! People have been wondering when NXT was going to feature him property. The hyperextend-your-arm tour continued this week with a stop at **Austin Theory**. What's the endgame for KUSHIDA? If **Isiah Scott** comes up empty-handed against **Santos Escobar**, a very pissed off KUSHIDA would be a formidable foe for **Legado Del Fantasma**.

The 'odd couple' pairing of **Killian Dain** and **Drake Maverick**? I'm not mad at it. The men's division needs tag teams. NXT UK is restarting, so presumably, the men of Imperium will go back over to join their stablemates. Breezango is going to need challenges and we've seen these unlikely pairings go on a run in wrestling before. I'm not sure that the Dain & Maverick duo win the tag titles, but they could give that tag division an option.



With the exception of Io/Shotzi, my favorite match of the night would be **Damian Priest** vs. **Timothy Thatcher** — the psychology of this match was phenomenal, in particular. Thatcher has a more technical style and Priest tries to match than in the beginning. Thatcher also called out Priest for being a 'weak striker,' and they build up to that very well. At first, it doesn't work and as the match goes on, the elbows and kicks wear Thatcher down as the match wore on.

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