

On This Day: April 16, 1994 – Super J Cup: Merry Christmas Japan. Here's Chris Benoit.

Super J Cup 1994

Date: April 16, 1994

Location: Sumo Hall, Tokyo, Japan

Attendance: 11,500

This is another requested show from a long time ago. This is one of those shows that you hear a lot about but most people haven't seen. It's a Junior Heavyweight tournament held in New Japan Pro Wrestling and featuring some big names, including Chris Benoit and Eddie Guerrero before most people had ever heard of either of them. This was named show of the year by Meltzer, but 1994 wasn't the best year for wrestling so it should be interesting to see what's going on here. Let's get to it.

After the opening video, we get all of the competitors introduced to us. Here are the brackets. Wild Pegasus and Great Sasuke have byes to the second round and will face the winners of the first and last matches respectively.

Wild Pegasus

Black Tiger

Taka Michinoku

Gedo

Dean Malenko

Shinjiro Otani

Super Delfin

Ricky Fuji

Negro Casas

Hayabusa

Jushin Thunder Liger

Masayoshi Motegi

El Samurai

Great Sasuke

Super J Cup First Round: Dean Malenko vs. Gedo

Gedo is more famous as half of a tag team with Jado. After a handshake they charge at each other and Dean dropkicks him to the floor. Back in and Gedo grabs the arm but Dean rolls out of it. This is very fast paced as you would expect it to be. Dean takes it to the mat and hooks a leg lock but Gedo counters into a kind of cross armbreaker. They trade arm control for awhile until Dean headscissors him into a standoff.

Gedo takes him down and puts Dean in a leg lock of his own, but Dean counters into the same arm hold that Gedo countered into earlier. Nice. It turns into an amateur mat battle with Dean working on the arm while Gedo tries to sit out. Gedo gets up and comes back with offense that looks like an American stereotype of Japanese wrestling. Dean takes him down into a chinlock which is quickly broken.

Malenko will have none of this being on defense thing so he goes all aggressive and rams Gedo into the corner and busts out a Jackhammer of all things (remember that this is in 1994) for two. Gedo takes him to the mat for a very modified STF. Dean makes the rope so they slug it out and collide. Gedo counters a tombstone into one of his own but misses the swan dive. Malenko rams him into the corner again and hits a top rope cross body for two, but Gedo catches him with a powerslam to advance. Dean's shoulder looked to be up but it counted anyway.

Rating: B-. Good opener here and the crowd was getting into it. Since this is a Jr. Heavyweight tournament there's going to be a lot of fast paced matches which makes things more interesting. Dean was still young

here and full of fire, making this a solid performance from him. I haven't seen much from Gedo but he doesn't seem to be anything of note.

Super J Cup First Round: Super Delfin vs. Shinjiro Otani

Delfin has a title which I think is the UWF Super Welterweight Title. Otani rushes him to start and immediately takes Delfin down by the leg. He hooks a modified heel hook/ankle lock but Delfin grabs a rope. Ohtani stays on the leg but shifts to a headlock. Delfin pops up and hits a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker as his knee is suddenly fine. Ohtani is like cool man and spin kicks Delfin's head off, sending him to the floor.

Back in and Ohtani cannonballs down on the leg Flair style and hooks a half crab. Delfin escapes and finally sells the knee, only to get taken down into a scissors lock. That gets broken via rope as well and a Saito Suplex puts Ohtani down for two, as does a splash. Ohtani dropkicks him to the floor and hits a huge dive, buckling Delfin's knee in the process. A springboard knee to the head gets two for Ohtani and it's off to what can best be called a cross kneebreaker. Delfin makes the rope again and they head into the corner for a tornado DDT from Delfin. Delfin ties him up in a complex looking pinning combination for the win.

Rating: C+. The knee stuff drove me crazy here as Ohtani dismantled that knee but Delfin didn't seem interested in selling it in any way at all. That's one of the biggest annoyances I have in wrestling, as it's disrespectful to the guy doing the work as well as looking ridiculous. Fun match for the Ohtani stuff, but he's a guy I've always liked.

Super J Cup First Round: Taka Michinoku vs. Black Tiger

Taka looks very young here and is of course more famous for his WWF run. Black Tiger is Eddie Guerrero under a mask and WAY before he was famous in the US. The winner of this gets Wild Pegasus, more famous as Chris Benoit. Eddie is heel here and takes Taka down fast, hitting the slingshot hilo and a BIG powerbomb for two. Neckbreaker gets two for Eddie and it's off to an abdominal stretch.

Eddie chops him down and puts on a Sharpshooter, which the announcers call a Scorpion. That's quickly broken and they collide as this is almost

too fast to call. Taka tries a clothesline but it only staggers Eddie, but Eddie's takes Taka's head off. Taka headscissors Eddie to the floor and moonsaults off the top back into the ring (Taka is alone in the ring and wasn't going after Eddie) to pop the crowd.

Back in and Taka moonsaults moonsaults over Eddie so he can suplex him down. Eddie goes to the floor and Taka hits a HUGE dive to take both guys out. Back in again and Michinoku hits a German for two as well as a rana for the same. Another rana attempt is countered into another BIG powerbomb for two. Eddie hits a top rope splash (not the amphibian kind) for two. Taka powerbombs Guerrero down for two and hits a moonsault for the same. Another moonsault hits knees so Eddie hits his brainbuster for two. Eddie is all ticked off now so he KILLS Taka with a tornado DDT for the pin.

Rating: B. This was a very fun and fast paced match. Even though it was just a spotfest, sometimes there's nothing wrong with that at all and it worked very well here. Eddie was on fire at this point and he would go to AAA soon where he would become a breakout star before heading to ECW and then WCW. Speaking of WCW, the music he left to sounded a lot like what would become the Nitro theme but it was too close to tell.

Super J Cup First Round: El Samurai vs. Masayoshi Motegi

Winner of this gets the Great Sasuke. Motegi has some title with him here as well which I think is the W*ING Junior Heavyweight Title. Motegi dropkicks Samurai down before the bell and knocks him to the floor for a suicide dive. With Samurai on the floor, Motegi loads up a dive but slips coming off the ropes for a laugh from the crowd. Back in and Samurai takes him to the mat and starts going amateur.

A fairly sloppy headscissors gets two for Samurai as does a side slam. Samurai hooks a Boston Crab which is countered into a pinfall reversal sequence for two for each guy. They stay on the mat for a bit until Motegi fights up, only to get tombstoned down immediately for two. Back up again and Samurai hits a kind of reverse suplex for two. Motegi hits a running elbow but gets sent to the floor quickly, with Samurai hitting a suicide dive of his own.

Back in and a missile dropkick gets two for Samurai but Motegi takes him right down again with a modified powerbomb. Samurai gets put in a rolling surfboard followed by a dragon sleeper which doesn't last long. Motegi tries what I think was supposed to be a headscissors but it landed more like a spinning cross body. That gets two and it's time for Motegi to roll some Germans. Those get two and they trade German attempts. Samurai finally hits one for two, followed by a powerbomb to get the pin on Motegi and advance.

Rating: D+. This was by far the worst match of the night so far as there were a ton of botches. Samurai started with the mat stuff and then went with the flying offense and the latter didn't work that well at all. The match was full of botches which really brought things down here. I've only heard of Samurai and I wasn't all that impressed here.

Motegi cuts a promo post match but I have no idea what he's saying.

Super J Cup First Round: Ricky Fuji vs. Negro Casas

Casas, a Mexican, dropkicks Fuji, a Japanese guy wearing a jacket that says Canada for some reason, down to start. They hit the mat with Fuji grabbing a quick headscissors, before being put in an STF to give Casas control. Casas throws on a headscissors of his own but Fuji comes back with a headlock. Back to their feet and Casas hits some kicks, only to be taken right back down by Fuji.

A quick dragon sleeper by Fuji is broken and a backsplash gets two for Casas. Fuji gets sent outside and taken down by a dive from Casas as things slow down. Back in and Fuji hits a top rope ax handle for two. Casas escapes a suplex and La Majistral gets two, as does a Saito Suplex. The middle rope backsplash from the middle rope misses for Casas and Fuji hits a Tiger Bomb to advance.

Rating: D+. Second pretty bad match in a row here. These two didn't click at all for the most part and I'm not sure whose fault that was. Fuji is a guy I've heard of but I'd like to know what the deal with that Canada jacket was. This wasn't the worst match I've ever seen, but there wasn't much good to it at all.

Super J Cup First Round: Jushin Thunder Liger vs. Hayabusa

Liger is basically divine at this point. Hayabusa immediately kicks him in the head and sends him to the floor, followed by a big dive. Back in and Hayabusa hits a missile dropkick to put Liger down. After a quick chinlock from Hayabusa, he hits a slam and legdrop for two. Off to a leg lock on Liger but Hayabusa's knee drop misses. Liger slaps on a figure four but Hayabusa grabs the rope.

Liger hits his palm strike to the face followed by a powerbomb for two. He stays on the knee of Hayabusa before killing him with a clothesline for two. Back to the knee but Hayabusa somehow hits an enziguri from his back to escape. Liger sends him into the corner and immediately follows in with a Rolling Liger Kick. Superplex gets two on Hayabusa.

Hayabusa comes back with a running dropkick for two as he's getting fired up now. Another running kick to the face puts Liger down for two. A senton and top rope spinwheel kick get two as does a moonsault. Hayabusa tries a spinning rana off the top but only gets half of it, resulting in a two count.

Liger gets slammed down and Hayabusa COMPLETELY misses a Shooting Star (Liger's signature move), with only his legs hitting Liger after Hayabusa had stopped moving at all. Thankfully Liger doesn't sell it and hits the Liger Bomb for two. Liger loads up a superplex but gets knocked off. Hayabusa jumps into a powerbomb and a fisherman's buster gets the pin to complete the second round with Liger advancing.

Rating: C-. Hayabusa was fun to watch but DANG did he miss some spots. He would eventually snap his neck like a twig and be forced to retire in 2001. Liger on the other hand is probably the most famous Japanese wrestler in America other than maybe Great Muta, so I think we know who the more successful one was. This would have been way better if Hayabusa didn't botch stuff so badly.

We recap the first round, so here are the updated brackets:

Wild Pegasus

Black Tiger

Gedo

Super Delfin

Ricky Fuji

Jushin Thunder Liger

El Samurai

The Great Sasuke

Super J Cup Quarter-Finals: Super Delfin vs. Gedo

Delfin grabs the leg to start and tries a half crab but Gedo reverses into one of his own. That doesn't work that well so Gedo chops him down and shouts a lot. Delfin pops up and chops Gedo down before shouting just like Gedo. Delfin speeds things up but Gedo dropkicks him down. Gedo dropkicks Delfin right back down, only to be sent to the floor for his efforts.

Back in and Delfin pounds away in the corner but gets atomic dropped out. Gedo hooks a quick chinlock but gets rammed into the buckle to break the hold. They chop it out and Delfin knocks him to the floor where he takes Gedo out with a big dive off the top. Back in and a victory roll gets a bad looking two for Delfin. By bad I mean the referee stopped counting because Gedo didn't kick out in time.

Gedo knocks him down and a moonsault gets two. A crucifix gets two for Delfin and the referee did it AGAIN. Delfin hits a German for two followed by a top rope elbow for two. Tornado DDT looks to finish for Delfin, but Gedo rolls him up for the pin. This time the referee counted three even though Delfin's shoulder looked to be up.

Rating: D+. This wasn't working for me either. Again it wasn't that bad, but it just wasn't that good. The refereeing was horrible here as the guy was missing almost everything the entire time, or at least the second half of the match. Nothing much to see here but we have something up next

that might be a bit better.

Super J Cup Quarter-Finals: Wild Pegasus vs. Black Tiger

In other words, Chris Benoit vs. Eddie Guerrero. Benoit takes him to the mat by the leg and cranks on it a bit but Eddie takes him down almost immediately as well. They fight over the leg and Eddie takes over before hitting a slingshot hilo for two. He hooks a kind of triangle choke on Benoit for a bit but Chris gets up again. Benoit grabs a reverse suplex and both guys are down again.

Benoit tries to suplex him to the floor but Eddie blocks it. That's fine by Benoit who snaps off a German and follows it up by a knee to the ribs. Eddie gets draped over the top rope in a move Benoit often used. Bridging German gets two for Benoit and the fans seem pleased. A big powerbomb (popular move tonight) gets two for Chris as does a snap suplex. Benoit hooks on the same kind of choke that Eddie had on earlier to slow things down.

Back up and Benoit tries another knee to the ribs but Eddie hooks a rollup for two. A clothesline and German get two each for Guerrero and it's camel clutch time. Eddie goes up (these holds don't last nearly as long as they do in America) but misses a missile dropkick. Benoit grabs a test of strength grip and Eddie is in trouble.

Actually scratch that as Eddie runs the ropes while holding Benoit's hand, slips, catches himself, and then hits a rana for two. Top rope rana gets two for Eddie as the fans are getting into this. Brainbuster looks to set up a tornado DDT from Eddie but Benoit shoves him off. Benoit loads up something on the top but Eddie shoves him off. Eddie dives at Benoit but gets caught in a powerslam/arm drag to the mat for the pin for Benoit.

Rating: B. Eddie vs. Benoit is a good match. Gee who would have seen that coming? This wasn't a classic or anything and I remember two distinctly better matches that they've had in the past, but still you can't go wrong with this pairing. Eddie was looking great here but Benoit was on fire and wasn't going to lose here no matter what Guerrero threw at him.

Super J Cup Quarter-Finals: The Great Sasuke vs. El Samurai

This should be good. Sasuke is a legendary junior heavyweight and can fly with the best of them. After about 30 seconds of circling each other they lock up. Sasuke takes him to the mat and works over the leg but can't get a half crab. Samurai hooks a hammerlock but gets caught in a leg lock on the mat. Samurai counters that into an attempted cross armbreaker but Sasuke is blocking most of it. Sasuke grabs the leg right back again but Samurai escapes into a standoff.

Now Samurai grabs Sasuke's leg in a reversal of roles. Samurai takes him to the mat and ties up the legs before adding a butterfly lock on top of it. That looked awesome. Sasuke heads to the floor and is hurting all over. Back into the ring and Samurai hooks a stump puller. Sasuke grabs a rope and heads to the floor again to cool things off. Back in and Samurai takes him right back down in a headscissors with an armbar which appears to be a signature move for him.

Sasuke breaks that and sends Samurai to the floor. In a cool looking visual, all of the photographers run to Samurai so they can see Sasuke hit a cartwheel into a moonsault to the floor. Back in and Sasuke kicks Samurai's head off for two. Samurai will have none of that though and puts Sasuke on the floor, followed by a huge flip dive to take out the Great one. Back in Samurai hits a German for two. The crowd is losing it more and more on each of these moves.

A flying headbutt gets two for Samurai and he's getting frustrated. Sasuke snaps off a rana for two and goes up, but Samurai stops him. Samurai can't slam him down though and gets caught in a sunset flip off the top for two. Back in the ring and Sasuke misses a spinwheel kick. Samurai powerbombs Sasuke down but it only gets two. Sasuke is getting fired up now and he rolls through a rana from Samurai for the pin.

Rating: B+. This was a very solid match all around with at least two distinct parts. They had the back and forth submission stuff to start and then they busted out the big spots and near falls, all of which were getting better and better each time. I can see why Sasuke is considered so great. Good stuff here and Samurai looked WAY better here than he did

in the first match.

Sasuke says something that I can't understand.

Super J Cup Quarter-Finals: Jushin Liger vs. Ricky Fuji

They fight for control to start and Fuji grabs a wristlock. Liger hits a monkey flip to escape and it's a standoff. A test of strength goes badly for Fuji and it's another standoff. Liger gets sent to the floor where Fuji hits a pescado and powerbomb to take over. Liger comes back with a kick to the chest and another to the head to take over. They head back to the floor and Liger drops a double stomp to the chest/stomach. FREAKING OW MAN!

Back inside and a rolling Liger Kick followed by a slam gets two. A release German puts Fuji down and Liger tries a superplex, only to have Fuji kind of fall on him for a cross body. Liger gets sent to the floor and Fuji hits a baseball slide. Back in and a release German gets two on Liger. Fuji goes up but gets shoved down and Liger hits a top rope rana for the pin to make the final four.

Rating: C-. Not bad here but Fuji was kind of a mess. At the end of the day though, it's Jushin Thunder Liger in 1994 and it's going to take someone awesome to beat him. Not a horrible match or anything here but Liger was in need of some better competition out there. That would come in the next match.

Remaining participants:

Wild Pegasus

Gedo

Jushin Liger

Great Sasuke

Fuji says something.

Super J Cup Semi-Finals: Gedo vs. Wild Pegasus

Neither guy can connect with anything flashy to start so they slap it out a bit. Benoit hits a neckbreaker for two followed by a middle rope legdrop for the same. Gedo hits a shoulder block and slaps on a double arm trap submission hold. Something like a piledriver gets two for Gedo and it's chinlock time. That's followed by another chinlock to mix things up. They get up and chop it out and you know Benoit is winning that.

Gedo dropkicks him to the floor and mostly misses a moonsault press to the outside. Powerslam and northern lights get two for Gedo but a falling headbutt (literally, he fell) misses Benoit. They both try Germans but Benoit settles for a bad powerbomb for two. A better version sets up a good falling headbutt from Benoit for the pin to send him to the finals.

Rating: C+. Not bad here but dang some of Gedo's stuff wasn't clicking at all. Benoit was never in any real trouble, which brought things down a bit. Still though, the match was pretty fast paced and entertaining which is the right idea. Gedo was just a stop on the road for Benoit and the match was too short to mean anything. Decent though.

Gedo talks.

Super J Cup Semi-Finals: The Great Sasuke vs. Jushin Thunder Liger

This is going to be awesome by definition. They fight for control to start and Sasuke gets him down by the leg. Liger rolls out and it's a standoff. Jushin throws on a reverse surfboard but Sasuke grabs the arm to escape. He can't get the armbreaker so they trade submissions for awhile until Liger hooks a kind of surfboard followed by the full on version. I still love that move. Liger cranks that up even more by keeping their legs up and hooking a dragon sleeper on top of it. FREAKING OW MAN!

Liger puts on a camel clutch and cranks on that sucker. The rolling Liger Kick hits and Sasuke is in big trouble. Liger kills him with a tombstone and throws on a crossface chickenwing to further punish Sasuke. Sasuke kind of falls out of that so Liger CRANKS on the arm with whatever evil ideas he can come up with. Yeah Liger is heel here. There's the cross armbreaker to Sasuke whose arm looks like jelly. This is total dominance so far.

Liger suplexes him down again and Sasuke is barely moving. Jushin goes up but Sasuke dropkicks him out of the air, sending him out to the floor. Sasuke hits a SWEET Asai Moonsault to take Liger out. Liger gets sent into the post from the apron so Sasuke hits a GREAT Swanton Dive to a standing Liger to take him down again. Back in and Sasuke drops some knees, followed by a spinwheel kick for two.

Sasuke hits a piledriver to put Liger down for two and a big old powerbomb gets the same. Now it's Liger that can barely move. Sasuke tombstones him down but the Swanton Bomb misses. Liger hits the running palm strike for two and he's getting frustrated. LigerBomb gets two as does a top rope rana, but Liger poses too much and gets rolled up for two. A release German gets two for Liger as does his fisherman's buster finisher.

Liger suplexes him over the top and out to the floor and hits a BIG dive. Back in and Liger is spent from trying so hard. Sasuke gets up to the apron behind Liger and tries a Hail Mary springboard...but he slips and falls flat on his face. Instead Sasuke hits a standing rana out of nowhere for the pin and a spot in the finals.

Rating: A. If that finish had hit, this would be a masterpiece. These guys were WORKING out there with Sasuke taking one of the worst beatings I've seen in years. Sasuke is a total freak with these high spots, flying all over the place and taking out everyone in sight. The botches hurt him a lot but this was awesome all the way through. Great stuff.

Super J Cup Finals: Wild Pegasus vs. Great Sasuke

They fight over arm control to start again and Sasuke spins and flips his way out of everything. The fans cheer for Sasuke which they've done all night so far. Benoit chops away in the corner but what might have been a Boston Crab is countered. Sasuke kicks him to the floor and Benoit takes a breather. Back in and Benoit takes him down with a triangle choke but Sasuke counters into a modified surfboard. Benoit pops up to a standoff and things reset.

Things speed up and Sasuke starts flying around, but Benoit takes his head off with a clothesline. The Canadian hits a German on the Japanese

for two. Sasuke comes back with a spinwheel kick and a legdrop for two. They fight for arm control on the mat as all of the tournament participants are watching at ringside. Sasuke gets up and tries to jump around some more but Benoit runs him over with another clothesline.

Benoit drapes him over the top rope and hits a springboard elbow of all things to put Sasuke on the floor. Back in and Benoit can't hit his dragon suplex. Ok scratch that as it gets two. Swan Dive gets two for Benoit as does a big powerbomb. Sasuke is amazing at selling this stuff too. Benoit channels his inner Hart and slaps on a Sharpshooter (remember this is 1994 and Bret is WWF Champion so it's a big move at this time).

The hold gets released for no apparent reason so Benoit hits a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker for two. Benoit misses a dropkick and gets clotheslined down. He'll have none of that though and snaps off a great German suplex for two. Dragon suplex is countered into a rollup for two and Sasuke kicks him to the floor. In a SWEET move, Sasuke cartwheels towards the ropes and hits a spinning backflip over the top to the floor to take Benoit out.

They head back inside and Sasuke hits a German of his own for two. A fisherman's suplex gets two for Sasuke as well but his missile dropkick misses. Sasuke goes to the apron but he suplexes Benoit over the top in a near 360 to the floor. Benoit slides back in but then right back out for some reason. Sasuke is annoyed by Benoit not making a commitment so he hits a missile dropkick to the floor. Back in and Sasuke is limping. Gee I wonder why. Top rope moonsault gets two on Benoit and a BIG reaction from the crowd. Sasuke goes up again but Benoit stops him and hits a gutwrench suplex off the top for the pin and the championship.

Rating: A+. This got five stars from Meltzer and I can't say I can argue. They beat the TAR out of each other and there weren't any major mistakes or botches at all in this. Benoit would go on to bigger and better things, but DANG Sasuke looked great. He kept flying higher and higher but Benoit was finally able to take him down and a wrestling move beat him. Great story to a great match.

A big ceremony ends the show. Benoit won a championship in this which may

or may not be the WWF Junior Heavyweight Championship. Liger, Sasuke and Gedo get trophies too.

Overall Rating: A. 1994 wasn't the best year for the big companies so I have no argument against this being show of the year. It runs just under three hours and after about the first hour, the worst match is good. The first hour has nothing bad at all in it and the rest is pure gold. The last two matches are EXCELLENT and are both well seeing. This was a great surprise and it's available in full on YouTube. Definitely check this one out if you like Cruiserweight wrestling as it's great stuff.

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