

Will Ospreay vs. Ricochet

I don't normally do this but I haven't seen a single match get this much talk in years. Back on May 27 at the Best of the Super Juniors Day 6, Will Ospreay and Ricochet (Prince Puma from Lucha Underground) had a match that was described as one of the best high flying matches in a very long time. However, not everyone was so happy with it. Many older wrestlers have said that it wasn't their style because the match feels like a choreographed routine instead of a wrestling match. I've seen clips of this everywhere, including on ESPN, meaning it's probably time I take a look at it. Let's get to it.

Will Ospreay vs. Ricochet

Date: May 27, 2016

Location: Korakuen Hall, Tokyo, Japan

Attendance: 1,505

Ospreay is a British wrestler who I've never actually seen outside of a few TNA matches. At the same time, I've only seen Ricochet as Prince Puma. Ricochet is one half of the IWGP Junior Heavyweight Tag Team Champions but this is non-title. See, because it's a singles match. The fans are behind Ricochet here and he works on the arm to start. Will spins out ala Owen Hart before grabbing a surfboard which is escaped in a good half second to give us a standoff.

Both guys spin out of headscissors before doing Tajiri handsprings into standing moonsaults for another standoff. Now THAT is the kind of thing that looks fake to me. The stuff earlier was fine but I absolutely cannot buy, under almost any circumstances, that this is supposed to be spontaneous with something like that going on. Ricochet counters a whip into the corner and scores with a 619 but gets dropkicked out of the air to a nice round of applause. I'd think it was Will kicking him for swearing so much but maybe that's just me.

Off to an Octopus Hold on Ricochet (that always looks painful) but he falls into the ropes for the break. Ricochet flips forward into a DDT (cool) and Ospreay falls out to the floor for a springboard corkscrew

dive to get the fans back into it. Back in and Ricochet kicks him in the chest a few times, causing Will to call him some very rude names. Ricochet bends him over his back (another Tajiri move) before putting on a hold that looks like he's setting up for a Burning Hammer but kneels while bending Will's leg around his head instead. Yeah it made my jaw hang open too.

There's a jawbreaker to stagger Ricochet and Will handsprings into an enziguri to put both guys down. Another enziguri (well a kick to the pad into Ricochet's head at least) sets up a Phenomenal Forearm (with Will adding in "Pip pip cheerio m*\$%#@#\$*%#er on the way down). Ricochet bails outside again and eats a handspring moonsault plancha before a springboard sunset bomb gets two for Ospreay back inside.

Ricochet gets in an enzigurit his time and a half nelson suplex gives him two of his own. Both guys moonsault over each other and score with kicks to the head at the same time to give us another breather. The fans think this is awesome which sounds a bit odd at a Japanese show. They fight to the apron (the wrestlers, not the fans) with Ricochet hitting an AA which should knock Will silly but he snaps off a reverse hurricanrana to put both guys down on the floor instead. Fighting spirit you see.

That earns a double nineteen count and it's time for a big slugout with right hands and European uppercuts but no clear winner. Yet another enziguri staggers Ricochet and sets up what looks to be a Rainmaker. Ricochet ducks (Good. Now I don't have to explain why A FREAKING CLOTHESLINE is still an overrated move.) and grabs a suplex but gets countered into a jawbreaker. A standing C4 gets two for Will and we've reached frustration point.

Ricochet comes right back with a jumping knee to the face and a standing shooting star for a shocking near fall of his own. The 630 misses though and Will grabs a DDT, only to flip forward as a bonus. Somehow that's only good for two as well so Ricochet tells him to bring it. Will is more than willing (see what I....nah that's too easy) to do so and fires off a bunch of kicks to the head, followed by a springboard Diamond Cutter (think the Lethal Injection minus the flip) for the pin at 16:47.

Rating: B+. Yeah this was nowhere near as bad as people were making it out to be though I can see the issues. The overly choreographed stuff is there but it's certainly not the core of the match that I was thinking it was going to be. There are FAR worse examples of that over the years (see Alex Shelley vs. Chris Sabin at Genesis 2009 for instance) and it actually felt like a match where they really did know each other well enough to counter most of their big spots.

Now that being said, there are some major issues here as well with stuff like the limited selling, the ridiculous amount of enziguris, that opening where they clearly worked out every single step (which happened again a few more times to lesser degrees) and too many strikes for my taste. However, it's certainly not the kind of thing that is killing wrestling or whatever it was that was said about this.

I do however get a lot of the criticisms that people have for this kind of wrestling. The old school wrestlers were all brought up with the mindset of being physical and telling a story, which really isn't how this comes off. Yeah it's physical, but there's very little flow to the match other than "I hit a big move and then you hit a big move, then we swear a lot and kick each other over and over.".

I'm much more of an old school fan so I'd much rather watch a match being built up over time instead of going from spot to spot. This was certainly entertaining but I'd call it much more not my taste than anything else. I'm not a fan of this style in Ring of Honor or New Japan or anywhere else like that but it's fun to watch every now and then. It's very different but killing wrestling is WAY too much of a stretch. I mean, it's not like this is the Bullet Club or something vile like that.

Maybe it was all the hype this match had over the last week but I kept waiting on the big stuff that was supposed to be all horrible looking and it never came. This was your standard modern cruiserweight style match and it was the standard result for something like this: entertaining though not exactly a high level of quality. That doesn't mean it's bad or anything and there is definitely a place for it, though it's something I would get tired of after a match or two. Fun stuff, but not my thing.

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