

NJPW G1 Special in USA Night Two: The Omega of the Alpha

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Date: July 2, 2017

Location: Long Beach Convention and Entertainment Center, Long Beach, California

Attendance: 2,305

Commentators: Jim Ross, Josh Barnett

We're back with night two of the show, though this didn't air on American TV until five days later. The big story tonight is the United States Heavyweight Title, which will be decided for the first time ever. Other than that we have Hiroshi Tanahashi defending the Intercontinental Title against Billy Gunn for reasons I can't quite comprehend. Let's get to it.

JR and Barnett welcome us to the show and recap the tournament so far. The Intercontinental Title match gets some attention of its own.

Jushin Thunder Liger/David Finlay/Kushida vs. Tempura Boyz/Yoshitatsu

Before we get going, we hit the posedown for some nice reactions from the crowd. Eh fine enough to open a show, especially when you have a major fan favorite like Liger in there. Liger puts Komatsu in a modified surfboard to start before sending him into the barricade. For some reason this gives us a Who's On First routine from the announcers because they aren't the best pairing in the world.

Everything breaks down with Liger getting triple teamed in the corner with a flapjack getting two. The Shotei Palm Strike drops Komatsu again though and it's a hot tag to Kushida as things speed way up. The announcers talk about food as Kushida grabs a Hoverboard Lock on Tanaka, only to be reversed into an over the shoulder backbreaker. A package piledriver doesn't work on Kushida and it's time to slug it out. Something like a Pele kick drops Tanaka but he catches Kushida in a German suplex.

Yoshitatsu comes in with a missile dropkick and is immediately booed out of the building, which apparently is a big thing for him. I always liked the guy but New Japan fans can't STAND the guy. Finlay comes back in and runs him over for two, only to get kneed in the face for the same. Everything breaks down and it's a triple submission with a Stretch Muffler making Komatsu tap at 8:54 while Liger had Tanaka in a surfboard and Yoshitatsu was in a Hoverboard Lock.

Rating: C+. Fine choice for an opener here as the fans are always going to eat Liger up with a spoon. The guy is really entertaining (his music is worth the price of admission alone) and Kushida is one of my favorites in the whole promotion. I'd still like to know what's up with Yoshitatsu but I'm sure it's something he did before.

IWGP United States Title Tournament Semi-Finals: Kenny Omega vs. Jay Lethal

Lethal has bad ribs coming in. Feeling out process to start and Omega wastes no time kicking him in the bad ribs, followed by another one to the chest. The ribs (both the good and the bad) are sent into the barricade a few times as it's very one sided to start. Back in and the One Winged Angle is broken up but it's too early for the Lethal Injection. Instead it's three straight superkicks (well if the Bucks aren't going to do them...), followed by the Lethal Injection. Lethal pops back up for three straight suicide dives.

Hail to the King gets two and Jay starts in on the leg as he channels Ric Flair. The Figure Four is broken up so he tries another Lethal Injection, only to have Omega block it with a somewhat botched Codebreaker. Eh I'll give it five and a half stars anyway. Omega is limping a bit but comes back up a few shots to the ribs. You can't say his psychology is off. The tape finally comes off the ribs and a few knees to the back get two.

Lethal fights out of the corner and grabs a Blue Thunder Bomb but can't follow up because of the ribs. The dragon suplex staggers Jay and the running knee to the jaw gives Omega two. A gutwrench sitout powerbomb (always looks cool) is good for the same but the One Winged Angle is countered. The counter is countered into the One Winged Angel though and

Omega is in the finals at 12:58.

Rating: B. The psychology was working here, even if the finish was a bit off. Still though, these two beat the heck out of each other and the ribs vs. the knee made enough sense. That being said, there was no way that Omega wasn't at least making the finals of this thing so it's not like the ending was in any real doubt.

IWGP United States Title Tournament Semi-Finals: Zack Sabre Jr. vs. Tomohiro Ishii

There's a weird visual here as Ishii is really thick but the lanky Sabre is a good four inches taller than him. Ishii forearm him in the face to start and Sabre hurts himself with a headbutt. Some hard chops in the corner have Sabre rocked but he keeps sticking his chest out asking for more.

With JR trying to figure out what Sabre is thinking, he gets in a kick to Ishii's arm and we have a target. It doesn't make the early strategy any more logical but at least he's doing his thing now. We hit something like a modified Tequila Sunrise with Sabre letting go for no apparent reason. Ishii knocks him back again and hits a loud running clothesline in the corner.

They head up top and Sabre grabs a Kimura, earning himself one heck of a superplex to bring him back down. Sabre comes right back with something like a reverse cross armbreaker but Ishii suplexes him into a heap. As JR says Sabre is the "TWG" World Champion, Ishii misses the sliding lariat and gets caught in another armbar. Sabre grabs the leg as well before wrapping his legs around the neck (these holds are INSANE every time).

Ishii dives over for the ropes for the break so Sabre kicks at the arm again. That's fine with Ishii who HITS HIM IN THE FACE. I love simple counters like that. Ishii counters yet another armbar so Sabre kicks him square in the chest. Not that it matters though as Ishii pops up with the brainbuster to advance at 11:45.

Rating: C+. Ishii is slowly growing on me but I'm in awe of a lot of those holds that Sabre throws out there. I don't even understand how he

does most of them, let alone how anyone gets out of them. It's not a great match here but it was rather entertaining, which is all you need a lot of the time.

Los Ingobernables de Japon vs. Dragon Lee/Jay White/Juice Robinson/Volador Jr./Titan

JR basically guarantees a spot fest here. This is New Japan vs. CMLL and hopefully JR can remember which luchador is which. Volador Jr., in a mask unlike last night, starts with Naito, who keeps walking away from lockups. Instead Naito rolls straight into his pose so it's off to Bushi and Takahashi to double team Volador, who has no problem sending them outside for an Asai moonsault.

Everything breaks down with Naito choking on the floor as Bushi chokes Titan inside. Sanada ties up Juice and Titan for kicks to the back of the tights. JR: "We don't have any idea what's going on either." Titan's comeback is cut off by Naito's enziguri as the announcers go into a discussion of Trish Stratus' chest. The hot tag brings in Robinson so clean house with a spinebuster planting Evil.

Takahashi eats a hard lariat and it's off to Lee to speed things up again. They chop the heck out of each other with the fans getting into it until Lee flips out of a hurricanrana. It's off to Evil vs. White (who I forgot was in this) with Jay getting the better of it off a clothesline. White gets cut off by a guillotine over the ropes and Evil gets in a side slam.

Everything breaks down again and it's White getting quadruple teamed inside. Robinson makes the save and cleans house and Titan hits a top rope Asai moonsault to take out Takahashi. White gets two off a Rock Bottom to Bushi but a Flatliner is enough to give Jay the pin at 12:29.

Rating: C+. It was fun and energetic but things go down a bit when you have the announcers riffing on the match being such a mess. It also doesn't help when there's very little setting the faces apart and the announcers didn't seem to know anything about them. Still a fun match, though I'm getting a bit numb to all these multi man tags.

Bullet Club vs. War Machine/Michael Elgin

It's the Guerrillas of Destiny and Hangman Page here and they're flanked by Chase Owens and FREAKING HAKU, the father of the Guerrillas. Well that works. Page and Elgin get things going with Adam having no problem forearming him in the face. It's fine with Elgin too, who BLASTS Page in the face with a forearm of his own.

That goes nowhere so it's off to the tag teams with War Machine shrugging off a double dropkick and throwing the brothers at each other. Everything breaks down and Elgin suplexes Page, followed by Rowe slamming Hanson on top of him. Hanson rubs his beard on Tama's face, which might be approved of in some areas. Loa comes in for an Oklahoma Stampede of all things and you know JR is happy with that one.

The beating of Hanson continues with the Bullet Club taking turns picking him apart. Hanson finally avoids a charge and makes the hot tag off to Elgin for the power man offense. The Falcon Arrow gets two on Page and everything breaks down again. Tama gets in a jumping neckbreaker on Elgin but Hanson cannonballs off the top to take out the Guerrillas. A fireman's carry/Blockbuster combo drops Hanson so Rowe comes in to hit people very hard. Page comes back in with a heck of a lariat though and the Rite of Passage ends Rowe at 11:17.

Rating: D+. This felt like they had a six man tag for the sake of having a six man tag. War Machine won the titles the night before and I really don't think they needed to set up a new match so quickly. Since all six of them appeared on the show the night before, they really could have cut this out to let the show breathe a bit more.

The New Japan boss thanks the fans for making this special and promises to bring the company back to America....in 2018. It's been an impressive weekend but I expected something a bit sooner than that.

IWGP Junior Heavyweight Tag Team Titles: Young Bucks vs. Roppongi Vice

The Bucks are defending and yes, these teams are fighting AGAIN. Now at Best in the World, the Bucks had the best match I've ever seen them have because they spared the superkicks. Let's see if they keep that up or

revert to the form that gets them the most praise. Nick throws a superkick less than a minute in but goes with the Sharpshooter instead, sending Romero bailing to the ropes.

All four come in and no one can hit anything, including a quadruple dropkick for a standoff. The Bucks are sent into the corner but come back with a double superkick (oh here we go) to knock Vice outside. Matt hits a heck of a moonsault to the floor, only to have Nick (the announcers are getting them confused again) miss a big flip dive back inside. Nick grabs Beretta off the apron and runs him up the aisle for a heck of a powerbomb as a fan yells something about Hot Topic.

Back in and the Bucks stay on Romero as we're doing the same "one member of Vice gets powerbombed in the aisle" formula for at least the third time. We hit the chinlock for a bit before the Indy Taker is broken up but there's no one for Romero to tag. JR: "It's almost like a handicap match." Thanks Jim. A double clothesline drops the bucks and Beretta is back up to take the tag.

Matt takes a tornado DDT but the powerbomb into the enziguri in the corner cuts Beretta off. Another Sharpshooter (I'm assuming that's a new thing for the Bucks because reasons) is broken up so Romero gets powerbombed onto Beretta for two. Romero gets in a double hurricanrana but eats a double superkick. A 450 and moonsault onto the back get two and Nick gets in a great shocked face. It's back to the Sharpshooter (NOT a Scorpion Deathlock JR/Barnett. There's a difference and you really should know that, even if you sound bored with this show.) but Romero makes a quick save.

Sliced Bread #2 (not a Blockbuster Barnett) is broken up so Beretta piledrives Nick on the apron. For those of you counting, Nick is on his feet twelve seconds later. A cradle piledriver gives Beretta two and Strong Zero gets the same and...my goodness we actually get tags. For what? Like seriously, for what?

Romero and Matt come in but the tagging part is quickly forgotten, allowing the Bucks to (mostly miss, though it's fair in this case) get in a springboard flip Meltzer Driver to Romero on the floor. This is

actually a tribute to Meltzer's father, who passed away recently before this show. Romero is dead so Beretta comes back in and spits at Matt, earning himself a superkick to the face and two to the back. Another Meltzer Driver to Romero sets up double Sharpshooters for the tap at 22:43.

Rating: B-. Too long here but, again, the lack of superkicks made it a more entertaining match. Granted it was brought down a good bit by the length and the sloppiness that came with some of the ridiculous flips. I'm not a big fan of the Meltzer stuff but the fans dig it enough so it's hard to get that mad about it. The Bucks are entertaining but hard to watch at the same time, if that makes sense.

Post match, Ricochet runs in and takes out both Bucks, saying he wanted to be here but a certain Underground fighting company (Lucha Underground if you're a bit slow) wasn't being very nice. He wants a shot at the titles with Ryusuke Taguchi as his partner. This segment didn't air in America due to Ricochet's contract with Lucha Underground.

Post dark segment Roppongi Vice lists off their five year checklist, which they've already accomplished. So now they're done because it's time for Beretta to move up to the heavyweight division.

Bullet Club vs. Chaos

Bullet Club: Bad Luck Fale/Cody/Marty Scurll/Yujiro Takahashi

Chaos: Briscoe Brothers, Kazuchika Okada/Will Ospreay

Just in case you didn't get enough multi-man tags yet. Scurll and Mark get things going as we hear about the Briscoes having 70,000 chickens. Red Neck Kung Fu is countered by the bird pose and we hit a standoff. One heck of a chop has Marty scurrying over to the ropes so it's off to Cody vs. Jay.

Cody tags Scurll back in but it's back to Scurll, then Cody, then Scurll and this is the reason both shows were three and a half hours. The fans want Fale so it's off to the big man...who tags Cody right back in. Now the fans want and get Yujiro and he tags right back to Cody. DID YOU GET

THE JOKE YET??? I'm not sure it sunk in. I'm aware Cody has a bad shoulder, but maybe they should just have him sit out and have a match if you just have to get this on the card.

Okada comes in so Cody bails as we're about three minutes straight now with no action. Ospreay is sitting in the front row having a beer before coming in to chase Cody around.....for a meeting in the corner. Now it's back to Jay and the lockup gets a pop. Cody powerslams Jay down, making me think that the comedy (as HILARIOUS as it was) was an even bigger waste of time.

Ospreay comes in and kicks away at the chest. Will misses a dive though and it's Yujiro coming in to stomp away. Yujiro dances a bit, then Scurll dances a bit, then Cody flips us off and gyrates the hips. Fale, in his Make Jobbers Great Again shirt, sits on Ospreay's chest for two but Scurll charges into a boot in the corner. Scurll does his big chickenwing thing, earning himself an enziguri.

Jay comes in to fire off the clotheslines and hands it off to Okada for the real house cleaning. A DDT drops Fale but Okada can't slam the monster. The second attempt works a bit better (naturally) but walks into a Samoan drop, followed by a splash for two. Cody comes back in and eats the flapjack (hopefully with some syrup) before it's back to Ospreay, who catches him with a spinning Stunner.

Scurll snaps the fingers, which JR calls illegal for sure. Uh, why exactly? We get the parade of people hitting each other in the face but Scurll busts out the umbrella to block the Rainmaker (how appropriate). Ospreay kicks Scurll and Cody in the face though and moonsaults over the top to take Marty out again. Will tries another springboard but Cody is right there with the Disaster Kick. Cross Rhodes ends Ospreay at 14:00.

Rating: C. This got better later on but I was getting very sick of that stupid comedy schtick. This was a great example of a match that could have been cut as Cody already had his big match and pining Ospreay in an eight man tag isn't exactly going to reignite whatever he had going on. We already saw these people last night and it really didn't help the show in any real way. It's ok to let the show breathe a bit instead of

cramming everything in.

We recap the IWGP Intercontinental Title match with Billy Gunn promising to bring his A game. Gunn's A game wasn't great at the peak of his career and I don't think I want to see what it's going to be like in his 50s.

IWGP Intercontinental Title: Hiroshi Tanahashi vs. Billy Gunn

Gunn is challenging and no, it still doesn't make sense no matter what. Feeling out process to start until Gunn shoulders Tanahashi away. They fight over a top wristlock until Tanahashi takes him down with a headlock. We're four minute into this and that shoulder block is the high spot so far.

The announcers talk about Lou Thesz as Gunn suplexes him down and throws the champ outside. Tanahashi's bad arm is wrapped around the post as I have a bad feeling we've already reached the peak of Gunn's abilities. A Jackhammer sets up a top wristlock and Gunn actually adds a low superkick.

Tanahashi gets punched out of the air but pulls Gunn's trunks down to reveal....more trunks. I guess Tanahashi gets bored and comes back with forearms, only to get caught with a cobra clutch slam. The Fameasser gets two but Tanahashi hits a quick Sling Blade and the High Fly Flow (with a SUCK IT) retains the title at 14:26.

Rating: D-. This is a situation where the bigger problem is what else it could have been. There are a TON of names on this roster that you could have put in there (pick one of Los Ingobernables for instance) and they go with Gunn. I get that he's a bigger American name but I really don't buy that they couldn't have brought in almost ANYONE else and gotten a better match. For the promotion based on in-ring work, this really didn't work, though it did to by very quickly.

IWGP United States Heavyweight Title: Kenny Omega vs. Tomohiro Ishii

For the inaugural title and Omega has the Bucks with him. They get straight to the physicality with an exchange of strikes before Omega slaps him in the face. Thankfully he's smart enough to stay on him and

get Ishii down before he can hand Omega one of his own body parts. Ishii tells him to kick harder and even sits there for them.

They head into the crowd as we go to the Attitude Era style brawling, which makes sense for someone like Ishii. Back in and Ishii slugs away before Omega invites him to get in a kick of his own. Ishii does just that and Omega suddenly realizes that was a REALLY BAD IDEA. The exchange of loud chops goes to Ishii and a powerslam gets two. Omega comes back with some ax handles to the chest and a middle rope moonsault for the same.

Kenny hits a big flip dive over the top and the Bucks set up a table. Josh: "The Bucks with their own gimmick table." We'll save that for later though as Kenny goes with a top rope dropkick to the back of Ishii's head. Ishii doesn't take kindly to all of these chops though and starts staring Omega down instead of selling the forearms. A hurricanrana gets Omega out of trouble because hitting him in the face over and over has no effect but a short flip onto your back knocks you silly.

Ishii takes him to the apron and blocks a German suplex through the table. Instead Omega tries a dragon suplex through the table so Ishii BITES THE ROPE to hang on, only to have his teeth give way so it's the dragon suplex through the table. That's only good for a nineteen count so Kenny blasts him in the head with a series of knees. A final knee is blocked so Omega tries a final, final knee, followed by another knee for two.

The One Winged Angel is countered into a DDT and Ishii hits a good looking top rope superplex for another near fall. They have another slugout until Omega hits the brainbuster for two. Ishii gets in a knee of his own, followed by the sliding lariat. Naturally Ishii is right back with a One Winged Angel of his own but Omega knees him down (AGAIN), followed by a reverse hurricanrana. Another running knee to the face sets up the One Winged Angel for the pin and the title at 31:22.

Rating: A-. It's good and had the right finish but those running knees to the face were getting on my nerves. The best positive about this match was how fast it went by. There are several matches with this much time

that feel close to twice this long but this one flew by like it was half the time. Ishii was a good foil for Omega here and the win feels important, even if it was fairly obvious.

Post match Cody comes out and snatches the belt away from Kenny, only to wrap it around his waist instead. The rest of the Bullet Club comes out to celebrate as Kenny grabs the mic. He's had a bunch of hardships this year but what separates the Bullet Club from the rest of the world is they never give up, just like the rest of the people here tonight. The fans made this show and New Japan is back next year. They rule the wrestling world and that's never changing. This was a good way to end the show as Omega is one of the faces of the promotion and the face of the promotion in America.

The announcers quickly wrap things up.

Overall Rating: B. I definitely liked the first night better but it's not like this one was bad. The problem here is the first night felt like a grand spectacle as the promotion made its big debut. This one though felt like they were cramming in a bunch of stuff that didn't need to be on there. I couldn't really think of anything that could have been cut off the first night but this one had multiple moments that could have been trimmed or flat out eliminated.

The Tanahashi match, which should have been a major deal, was a complete misfire and the War Machine stuff felt like it could have come weeks from now instead of immediately. It's still a good show and a big success for the promotion but this show could have had a good half hour to forty five minutes cut out to really improve things.

Overall for the two nights, it's definitely a great debut, but you know the fans are going to get ahead of themselves. They put on two very good shows in front of less than 5,000 fans combined in the second biggest market in the country. It's a very solid performance for the independent level around here but they're FAR away from being in WWE's universe over here, which to be fair New Japan certainly seems to know. If this show is even something of a hit among the casual fans, we'll see where they can go from there but for now, just consider it a success and start to build

from here.

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