

NJPW Dominion 6-9: It's Worth The Wait



IMG Credit: New Japan Pro Wrestling

Dominion 6:9

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Location: Osaka-Jo Hall, Osaka, Japan

Commentators: Don Callis, Kevin Kelly

So this was a big request and therefore I'm powerless to do anything about it. The main event is yet another Kenny Omega vs. Kazuchika Okada match (maybe the stars are just counting how many matches they've had) though this time it's 2/3 falls and no time limit. Thankfully there hasn't been the crazy hype about the match to drive me crazy yet so I might like it a lot more. Let's get to it.

We open with a highlight video running down tonight's card, albeit in Japanese so it might be a recipe for fruit pies.

IWGP Junior Heavyweight Tag Team Titles: Roppongi 3K vs. El Desperado/Yoshinobu Kanemaru

El Desperado/Yoshinobu Kanemaru are defending and are part of Suzuki-gun. Sho and Yoh flip dive onto the champs before the bell and it's Kanemaru taking a sliding dropkick to the head for two to start. The announcers

explain a bit more of the idea here, talking about how Roppongi used to be Young Lions and the older guys, like the champs, still see them as weaklings. That's more of a story than most WWE matches give you.

Yoh gets sent into the barricade and has to dive back in at nineteen. Back in and we settle down a lot with Kanemaru ripping at the face and bringing Desperado back in. A dragon screw leg whip gets Yoh out of trouble and there's the diving tag to Sho. The champs get speared down and some rolling German suplexes get two on Desperado.

Back up and the champs start double teaming until Yoh comes in for a save. A sliding DDT/Dominator combination (3K) gets two on Desperado and a Backstabber into a dropkick has him in even more trouble. Desperado takes some mist to the face and Sho adds Project Ciampa for two more. The ref gets bumped though and Kanemaru adds a whiskey bottle shot to set up the rollup pin to retain the titles at 9:29.

Rating: C. Completely fine opener here and a good way to make Suzuki-Gun look like a bunch of cheating jerks. Sho and Yoh are so much more entertaining than they were back in Ring of Honor and they make for a snappy little team. This was a fun match and thankfully it didn't overstay its welcome, which can be a problem in opening matches.

Juice Robinson/David Finlay vs. Yoshi Hashi/Jay White

Taguchi Japan vs. Chaos and Finlay has a Groot jacket. White jumps Robinson at the bell, meaning we have to rush to the zoom in shot that always starts the matches (I kind of like it for some reason). Robinson is right back up and Finlay comes in for a double bulldog as they're certainly off to a fast start. Takahashi comes in for a suplex before handing it right back to White for a backbreaker. A cravate doesn't keep Finlay down for very long and it's off to Juice for the snap jabs.

White is loaded into the corner for a Cannonball but Takahashi tries to break things up. That doesn't go so well for him as Robinson ties him in the Tree of Woe and now the Cannonball can hit both of them at the same time. A double flapjack plants White but Robinson accidentally punches Finlay, allowing White to grab a Blade Runner to plant Finlay. Not that it matters as Robinson comes back in for Pulp Friction (jumping

Unprettier) for the pin on White at 7:28.

Rating: C. Another perfectly fine match that didn't get a ton of time. The ending has to set up Robinson vs. White for the US Title, probably in San Francisco in July, and there's nothing wrong with that. Robinson has grown by leaps and bounds in New Japan and I could go for seeing him get a lot closer to win the title.

Robinson holds up the US Title to hammer the point home.

Tomohiro Ishii/Toru Yano vs. Minoru Suzuki/Zack Sabre Jr

Chaos vs. Suzuki-gun and I don't quite see Yano matching up well with Sabre. Suzuki and Sabre's British Tag Team Titles aren't on the line and they have Taka Michinoku in their corner. He even throws in some custom introductions, which I again can't understand. Suzuki and Ishii start things off and they go straight for the shots to the head. Neither can hit their finisher so it's Sabre coming in and taking Ishii down in knots. Ishii gets up and goes with the power to take over, allowing the tag off to Yano.

This doesn't go well either as Yano gets his arms cranked in short order. Suzuki comes in and stays on the arm with Sabre coming back in to work on the leg at the same time. An atomic drop gets Yano out of trouble and it's off to Ishii for the hard chops in the corner. The sleeper doesn't work on Ishii and it's time for the big forearm exchange.

That means a double knockdown so Yano goes after the turnbuckle. Thankfully Sabre is right there to bend the arm around the ropes, making Yano scream again. Yano gets the other buckle pad off and Sabre misses a charge. The low blow is reversed into a double armbar and Yano gives up at 8:42.

Rating: D+. I get what Yano's deal is and I've been tired of it for a long time. I know he's had more success, but he comes off as the New Japan Santino with the same bits and the same jokes time after time. Ishii vs. Suzuki was fun, as always, and they were smart to keep this short.

Post match Ishii goes after Suzuki again and after a few chair shots each, they slug it out on the floor with the Young Lions coming in for the save.

Never Openweight Title: Michael Elgin vs. Taichi vs. Hirooki Goto

Goto is defending and Taichi, who seems to be a singer, has a good looking woman with him. Elgin is absolutely jacked and looking bigger than I've ever seen him. There's no contact in the first minute as Taichi bails to the floor so the other two can go at it. Goto and Elgin lock up so Taichi comes back in for a rollup on the champ. That's enough to send Taichi back to the floor and it's Elgin with an enziguri to Goto.

Taichi comes back in to help kick Elgin down and gets suplexed onto Elgin for good measure. Elgin sends the two of them into each other and starts rolling the suplexes to take over for the first time. With the other two on the floor, Elgin hits a bit running flip dive because of course he can do that. Back in and Taichi gets two off a clothesline but walks into the fireman's carry backbreaker which I still can't spell.

Elgin gets belly to back superplexed but pops back up for a Tower of Doom with Taichi getting the worst of it. That sends Taichi to the floor, leaving Elgin and Goto to hit each other very hard. An electric chair suplex gives Elgin two on the champ but he misses an enziguri. Another fireman's carry backbreaker sets up the GTR for two on Elgin but Taichi throws the woman inside. The distraction lets Taichi get two off a superkick, only to have Elgin buckle bomb both of them. The Elgin Bomb on Taichi is good for the pin and the title at 13:44.

Rating: C+. Elgin, while having some serious issues at the moment, is still fun to watch and looks more than intimidating enough to pull off something like this. Of course none of that matters as he wouldn't even hold the title for two weeks, but at least we got a good performance to get the title on him in the first place. I can't imagine he'll be a big deal in the states for a good while so this is as good as it's likely to get for him.

IWGP Tag Team Titles: Young Bucks vs. Los Ingobernables de Japon

Evil and Sanada are defending and it's Nick and Sanada running the ropes to start. A headscissors drops Sanada and it's time for Nick to strike a pose. Stereo basement dropkicks have Sanada in trouble so Evil comes in, only to take half of a double dropkick. Back in and a side slam drops Matt as everything breaks down. There's a whip into the barricade to keep Matt's back in trouble, followed by a standing moonsault to give Sanada two.

Evil is smart enough to knock Nick off the apron but Nick is right back up for a kick to the head. The hot tag is on a few seconds later but Nick kicks the post by mistake. It's fine enough to hold Evil, only to have Matt superkick his brother by mistake. Naturally the Bucks aren't going to sell for more than about five seconds so they're up top for a Tower of Doom with Sanada getting the worst of it.

The Meltzer Driver is broken up but Nick is fine enough to come in with a missile dropkick to save his brother from a dragon sleeper. Another Meltzer Driver attempt fails as Nick's leg gives out and a Magic Killer gets two on Matt. Sanada starts cleaning house with dropkicks and there's another dragon sleeper on Matt, with Nick making another save. The Bucks start in with superkicks and More Bang For Your Buck to Sanada gives them the titles at 14:53.

Rating: B+. It never ceases to amaze me how much better the Bucks' matches are in New Japan than they are in Ring of Honor. Over in ROH it's a bunch of superkicks at the end and then the Meltzer Driver with very few instances of them really ever being in trouble. Here they start fast, take a beating, sell the heck out of injuries, and grit their way to a win in an exciting finish. That's actually entertaining and good, which isn't something I would say more than once or twice in ROH. Do more of that and my complaints will be at a minimum.

Post match the Bucks hire Callis for All In.

Bullet Club vs. Hiroshi Tanahashi/Jushin Thunder Liger/Rey Mysterio Jr.

Well you know that face team is getting a pop. It's Cody, Hangman Page and Marty Scurll for the Club here. Rey is in tights, which I haven't seen him wear in many, many years. He also has some rap song so it's not

all great. Liger and Scurll, who have been having issues of late, are about to start, but Rey and Page come in with no contact. Actually make that Tanahashi vs. Page, with the first contact coming a minute and a half in.

Takahashi headlocks him down and gives us some air guitar so it's off to Cody after the strenuous grappling. Cody and Tanahashi exchange pushups before Rey and Scurll come in. That means we actually get something, including a sunset flip for two on Marty. Liger comes in and Scurll panics, partially due to a surfboard to make Marty scream. Marty does the same thing to take over and it's Cody coming in to punch Liger in the mask.

The Club starts in on Liger's leg and you know a villain and a guy named Hangman aren't going to have issues with that. A tilt-a-whirl backbreaker (onto the good knee) gets Liger out of trouble and it's back to Rey so things can speed up. The moonsault into a tornado DDT plants Scurll but Page makes a blind tag to break up the 619. Everything breaks down and the teams trade cheap shots from the apron.

Tanahashi and Page knock each other down so it's Cody coming in to face Liger. The palm strike gives Liger two and it's Page breaking up another 619 to Marty. I hope Scurll gets him a fruit basket. That's fine with Rey, who hits a 619 to Scurll and Page at the same time. Ok maybe the fruit can be a little bruised. Mystério and Tanahashi hit dives to the floor but the brainbuster is countered into Cross Rhodes for the pin on Liger at 11:36.

Rating: C+. Mystério looked awesome here, easily the best I've seen him in a long time (maybe it's the tights). There's nothing wrong with the legends taking a loss here as the Bullet Club is the hottest thing in the world at the moment. Cody pinning Liger should be a nice little boost for him, though I'm not sure if Cody has anything going on around here other than feuding with Kenny Omega without feuding with Omega.

The heroes get a big sendoff.

IWGP Junior Heavyweight Title: Hiromu Takahashi vs. Will Ospreay

Takahashi is challenging after winning the Best of the Super Juniors tournament. Ospreay already has a banged up neck after his injuries from about two months ago. They go straight at it with right hands and Ospreay charges into a belly to belly into the corner less than twenty seconds in. A sunset bomb to the floor is broken up so they fight to the ramp with Ospreay getting a running start for a big flip dive. The floor padding is pulled back but Ospreay can't hit Stormbreaker (a double underhook twisted into a neckbreaker), meaning it's time to head back inside.

Ospreay is fine enough for a running corner dropkick and he cranks back on both of Takahashi's arms at once. How Zack Sabre Jr. of him. Takahashi bails to the floor, only to come back in and have his arm cranked a little more. After a double armbar is broken, Takahashi sends him outside for a hard dropkick from the apron to take over. A pop up powerbomb gives Takahashi two and some hard chops draw some swearing from Ospreay. The champ is back up with a 619 to the standing face and a springboard clothesline, apparently called Pip Pip Cheerio. That's just great.

The Space Flying Tiger Drop (wacky Japanese move names are so much fun) puts Takahashi down again but the Oscutter is countered into a German suplex for a sweet reversal. They slug it out for a few seconds before cranking the pace WAY up. A pair of reverse hurricanranas look to set up the Stormbreaker but Takahashi reverses into a Code Red for no cover. That's enough to send them to the apron, which is where Ospreay hurt himself in the first place. Instead of something stupid, it's an apron superplex (in a power display you wouldn't expect from Ospreay) before he drapes Takahashi over the top.

That means a shooting star press to the back (the Burning Star), because Ospreay does some insane flips. A corkscrew shooting star press (Neville's Red Arrow) gets two and Stormbreaker is countered for a third time. This time it's into a middle rope Canadian Destroyer, followed by a triangle choke as he's really banging on that neck. Ospreay can't powerbomb his way out of it so he lifts Takahashi up again and just drops him on his head for the break instead.

Another Oscutter is broken up as Takahashi shoves him off the ropes and

hits a sunset bomb. Back in and a fireman's carry into a spinning slam (kind of like Chris Sabin's old Cradle Shock but called the Dynamite Plunger) gets two more and they're both spent. The Time Bomb is escaped so Ospreay kicks him in the face. Stormbreaker is countered AGAIN into another triangle before Takahashi switches to a butterfly piledriver (geez). A Death Valley Driver into the corner sets up the Time Bomb for the pin on Ospreay and the title at 20:22.

Rating: A-. Well that was awesome. Takahashi played the neck perfectly and in the end it was one big move after another to finally put the champ away. He's rather good, and the lack of that stupid Daryl thing made it even better. Ospreay is great of course and those flip are often incredible, especially for someone that much bigger than most cruiserweights. Awesome match, with a great story throughout, especially with how many times they changed the pace so drastically.

Takahashi rolls around on the mat with the title, laughing hysterically.

We recap Tetsuya Naito vs. Chris Jericho. Chris attacked him back in January but hasn't wrestled since. Then Naito won the Intercontinental Title, only to be attacked by a masked Jericho. The title match is set, which could be a heck of a fight, especially with Jericho being so aggressive in Japan.

IWGP Intercontinental Title: Chris Jericho vs. Tetsuya Naito

Naito is defending while Jericho is in some weird face paint and lipstick, plus leather pants. Kind of a Clockwork Orange look actually and that's not working for me. Jericho jumps him on the floor before Naito can even get the white suit off. A kick to the back and a suplex on the floor have Naito in even more trouble as we're still waiting on the opening bell. Jericho even powerbombs him through the table (great break) and Naito is rocked.

With Naito more or less dead, Jericho steals a camera and films himself flipping people off. A DDT onto (not through) a table makes it even worse but Jericho stops to sign an autograph on a format sheet. Jericho throws him inside and says to ring the f***** bell so he can cover for one.

The fans chant for Naito and get flipped off, followed by a butterfly backbreaker and the Lionsault for two. Some hard whips into the corner keep Naito down and the Walls go on, sending Naito straight to the rope. Naito gets in a hard slap and tackles Jericho down, finally allowing him to take off the vest. A neckbreaker on the apron and another from the apron to the floor has Jericho in trouble. It's time to choke with the pants, followed by a few rams into the barricade.

Naito blasts him in the head with the broken table and piledrives him onto the same table from the DDT....which still doesn't break. Sweet goodness that's a heck of a table. Back in and Naito, with his bloody eye, gets his super hurricanrana countered into the Walls. That's escaped as well and Naito gets two off a DDT. The Walls go on for the third time but the fans drive him to the ropes for yet another break.

A German suplex and Destino get two with Jericho grabbing the rope. Now Naito is bleeding from the ear as well so Jericho slaps him upside the head. Naito's flying forearm is countered into a Codebreaker for a near fall. The Lionsault hits knees and a pumphandle into a reverse suplex (that's a new one) drops Jericho on his head. Back up and Jericho shoves the referee, kicks Naito low, and hits the Codebreaker for the pin at 17:18.

Rating: B+. This was similar to the Omega vs. Jericho match with Jericho playing the smoke and mirrors to a high level and presenting it as more of a fight than a match. Naito is a top guy in New Japan and will likely get a boost out of losing, as dropping a title to Jericho is hardly the worst thing in the world. If nothing else, Jericho losing the title to someone else is going to give them a heck of a rub. Really entertaining match here though and that's all you would have expected from Jericho.

Post match Jericho hammers away at the bad eye and nails Naito with a belt shot. Jericho pulls off his belt to whip Naito, drawing in Evil for the save.

We recap the main event, which is the final blowoff to Kenny Omega vs. Kazuchika Okada, who come into this 1-1-1. Okada has held the title for nearly two years and has pretty much every record in the history of the

belt. They wrestled to an hour draw here last year and now it's time for a no time limit 2/3 falls match.

IWGP World Heavyweight Title: Kenny Omega vs. Kazuchika Okada

Okada is defending and it's no time limit, 2/3 falls. Kota Ibushi and Gedo are the respective seconds. Feeling out process to start, which is exactly how something like this should be starting. A fight over arm control gives us a standoff so Omega takes him to the mat for a quickly broken hammerlock. Okada has some slightly better luck with a leg crank but Omega is next to the rope. They both tease right hands in the corner and things speed up in a hurry with both finishers missing to send both of them outside.

A hard whip into the barricade has Omega in trouble and there's a running boot to the face, only to have Omega hit the first (of probably about 75) V Trigger of the match. That's only good for two back inside so Omega starts kicking at the back, which Okada invites without much of a grimace. A backbreaker sets up a one arm camel clutch but Okada gets in a flapjack for a breather. Okada's DDT gets two and we hit a rather bad looking cobra clutch. That goes nowhere so Okada sends him outside for a dive.

That's fine with Omega, who tosses the champ over the barricade for a springboard dive and a nice reaction. Back in and another V Trigger misses, allowing Okada to grab a German suplex. They're twenty minutes in here and it's felt like half of that. Okada fights out of a super Snapdragon and Tombstones Omega on the apron, thankfully without the announcers telling us that it's the hardest part of the ring. Omega gets sent ribs first into the barricade and you can see the confidence on Okada's face.

A missile dropkick gets a lazy near fall but Okada takes too long loading up the Rainmaker and gets kicked to the floor. The Rise of the Terminator sets up the running no hands flip dive and the fans are rather impressed. Back in and Okada breaks up the Snapdragon and a One Winged Angel, so Omega V Triggers him again.

Omega's German suplex gets two and there's the third V Trigger. He still

can't hit the One Winged Angel (they're setting that up very well) so Okada hits his perfect dropkick. There's a Tombstone for two but the Rainmaker is countered, only to have the counter countered into a cradle to give Okada the first fall at 28:48.

We take a quick break for a few minutes before Okada dropkicks him to the floor to start the second fall. The ribs go into the apron and the barricade a second time as the champ is in full control. A hanging DDT off the barricade should knock Omega silly and they head back inside. Omega's chops are shrugged off and it's a big boot into another cobra clutch. That goes nowhere so let's head outside again with a table being laid on top of Okada for a running double stomp from the apron. Again the table doesn't break (the Dudleys must hate this country) and Omega gets his knees up to block a backsplash inside.

An AA drops Omega again and they're both down one more time. Okada goes up top but gets caught in a superplex as the fans get behind Omega again. That's cut off by a middle rope moonsault hitting knees so Okada stops to point at a table. The backdrop over the top (like in the first match) is blocked and Omega hits a running tornado DDT. Neither can hit anything off the apron but neither finisher can hit on the floor either.

Instead Omega hits a reverse hurricanrana to knock Okada silly but he's back in at nineteen. The fifth V Trigger looks to set up the One Winged Angel, which is reversed into another Tombstone (I believe we're at three now). Okada's Rainmaker is countered into a spinning Rock Bottom for another double knockdown. The Snapdragon rocks Okada but he pops up with another dropkick to send Omega into the ropes.

We haven't have a V Trigger in a bit so there's number six, only to have Okada get two off the same rollup that won him the first fall. Therefore it's another V Trigger to set up a double underhook piledriver for two on the champ. Hey look! A V Trigger! This one sets up the One Winged Angel to tie things up at 50:35. After another rest period, Okada is almost ready to remember what planet he's on. Therefore, say it with me: V TRIGGER (that's nine if you've lost count) but Okada reverses the One Winged Angel into the Rainmaker for a double knockdown.

That's good for a delayed two and neither can hit a Tombstone. Okada misses the dropkick as Omega can't come off the ropes. He's fine enough to hit a Styles Clash with Okada grabbing the rope for a save. A V Trigger in the corner connects but the One Winged Angel is countered into a Tombstone which is countered into a Tombstone from Omega. Ibushi gets up on the apron for some advice, but Omega misses the Phoenix splash (Ibushi's finisher).

We break into the hour mark with V Triggers eleven, twelve and thirteen, followed by two more dropkicks from Okada. The champ loads up another Rainmaker, which connects, but with almost no impact as he collapses from exhaustion (as Omega did last year when he was about to take the Rainmaker). They slug it out from their knees but Okada pulls him up for a quick Rainmaker. There's a fourth Rainmaker and he loads up a fifth, which is countered into a German suplex.

Omega rolls some more German suplexes but gets reversed into another German suplex. Another Rainmaker attempt is countered into another German suplex and Omega adds a reverse hurricanrana to spike Okada on his head. ANOTHER V Trigger is countered with ANOTHER dropkick but ANOTHER Rainmaker attempt is countered into a kind of sloppy One Winged Angel. Omega can't cover so it's V Trigger lucky number fifteen and One Winged Angel #3 to give Omega the third fall and the title at 69:52 (including the breaks between falls).

Rating: A+. If I could go between A+/A here I would, but I'm not one to change a system that has served me very well for so many years and make things that much more complicated for everyone involved. The match is incredible and one of the best performances I've ever seen. The guys beat the heck out of each other and called back to their previous classics while adding in new stuff. Okada being the one to collapse on the Rainmaker was great and made Omega look like the better man. Omega winning two straight falls make him look like the rightful champion, capping off a great story.

But give me a break with the seven stars thing. As I've said many times: I'm now either supposed to believe that this is 40% better than any previous five star match, or every match ever has to be redone because

the scale has changed. As I mentioned more than once: they repeat A LOT of moves and spots, plus at times it felt like they were repeating stuff and filling in spots for the sake of breaking an hour and having one of the longest title matches ever. There are times where that works (which it did here at some points) and there are times where it feels like you're trying to be epic (which it did here at some points).

Overall, it's definitely a masterpiece and well worth checking out, but is it the best match of all time? Heck if I know, and heck if anyone else knows too. This match was less than two weeks ago and I've been finished watching it for about fifteen minutes. One of the my all time favorite matches and a match that I would put on a short list for best match of all time is Austin vs. Hart at Wrestlemania XIII. I watched that match last year and I was STILL finding new stuff about it that I hadn't noticed before.

Will that be the case here? Probably, but I'd like to wait until the following month before putting it among the best of all time and above so many other things that have impressed me before. Over time, matches are looked at in different ways and tastes can change dramatically throughout the years. I know it's great, but immediately giving it some kind of other worldly praise sounds like a six year old who just saw THE NEW GREATEST AND COOLEST MOVIE HE'S EVER SEEN for the fifth time this year.

The other question is will the match hold up as well over time. I know the immediate answer is yes, but look at what they did just a year and a half ago. The Wrestle Kingdom XI match was given six stars by Meltzer, meaning that this match has now left that one in the dust if you're using the same scale (this match would be about 17% better if you're a numbers person). If you're basing it on that, the Wrestle Kingdom match is blown away by this one and isn't even in the discussion. That took a year and a half. What is this match going to be seen as at this time next year?

In other words, let these matches sink in a bit before they're labeled as the best ever or SO much better than anything else that's ever been done before. It makes things sound silly instead of great, which is the point in offering these matches so much praise. The match was great, I'd watch it again, and Omega deserves to be champion after taking the title from

maybe the best champion ever. If the match can hold up and stand the test of time, then we'll see if it's as good as some have claimed it to be. Amazing match, despite a few issues here and there.

Post match the Young Bucks come out and celebrate with Omega, officially setting things right with them before he'll even accept the title. Omega thanks the fans in Japanese and says this was his final goal. He'll be here for the future and (in English) he's been told to stay calm and tranquilo. That's not his way though and he knows with these men at his side, they can do anything. Omega bids us goodnight and goodbye but here's Cody to walk halfway down the ramp and then turn around to end the show. Eh it worked for Owen Hart.

Overall Rating: A-. Great show, as New Japan always tends to be. The first hour and a half or so didn't exactly blow me away (though it was quite watchable) and then it picked up a lot in the second half and never looked back. New Japan has stopped being on a roll and now is just this good. Wrestle Kingdom could go multiple ways and the G1 should be very interesting. I'm curious as to how long Omega holds the title, and if he'll stick around after dropping it. Really, what else is left for him to do in New Japan now that he's won the title? Anyway, another incredible night which again flew by, which New Japan does better than anyone.

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