

NJPW G1 Climax Special In San Francisco: Be Sure To Have Some Tongans In Your Stable



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G1 Climax Special In San Francisco

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Commentators: Jim Ross, Josh Barnett

We're back stateside now and that means we should be in for a fun show. Last year's version of this saw the crowning of the first ever United States Champion and the title is on the line again tonight. However, the main event is of course for the World Title with new champion Kenny Omega defending both the title and the leadership of the Bullet Club against Cody. Let's get to it.

The announcers, in front of a mostly empty arena, welcome us to the show.

The opening video looks at the show a year ago and then tonight's five title match. This has a very old school WCW feel to it and that's not a bad thing. As expected, this mainly focuses on Cody vs. Kenny Omega in tonight's main event.

Bullet Club vs. Chaos

Bullet Club: King Haku/Tama Tonga/Tonga Loa/Yujiro Takahashi/Chase Owens

Chaos: Yoshi-Hashi/Gedo/Rocky Romero/Sho/Yoh

Yes THAT Haku, the father of the Tongans (the Guerrillas of Destiny). Yujiro doesn't have his ladies with him, making his existence far less important. Haku and Yujiro start things off and a running dropkick puts Haku down. The Tongans come in for a triple headbutt and it's off to Romero vs. Loa. That's it for the one on one as the Guerrillas splash the heck out of him in the corner.

A piledriver gets two and it's Loa staying in to beat on Romero even more. Owens comes in and gets two off a backbreaker before quickly leaving so the more interesting Tongans can take over again. JR mistakenly calls Takahashi a junior heavyweight, again showing the level of research he puts into these shows.

Romero hurricanranas both Owens and Loa down at the same time and it's Yoh (not Hashi JR) coming in to clean house. A reverse DDT gets Yujiro out of trouble and it's Tama running Sho and Yoh over again. Everything breaks down with an exchange of kicks to the face and Romero suicide dives Loa into the barricade. Back in and Haku Death Grips Gedo, leaving Tonga to Gun Stun him for the pin at 9:24.

Rating: C-. Perfectly acceptable opener here, JR's issues with knowing what he was talking about aside. The Guerrillas are still one of the coolest teams around and Haku adds the legendary/HE'S GOING TO KILL ME vibe to the team. Chaos continues to be a thing that just kind of exists around here and that's actually kind of an important role to play. Fine for an opener.

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

Chaos vs. Suzuki-gun in a rematch from last month's Dominion where Suzuki and Sabre won. Ishii and Suzuki hit each other in the face over and over to start, as they are required to do, likely by law. Suzuki actually gets knocked into the corner and tags out early on, giving us Sabre vs....Yano. Great. Ishii sends Suzuki into the post as Yano gets his hand cranked a bit.

The hiding in the ropes doesn't work as Suzuki is right there to yell in

his face. Sabre starts in on a modified Indian Deathlock as the eternal battle between Suzuki and Ishii continues on the floor. Suzuki comes back in and grabs a few double submissions on Yano. I enjoy seeing him in extreme pain far too often. Somehow that's not enough or a submission so it's back to Ishii to knock Suzuki into the corner.

This time it's Suzuki getting the better of it and knocking Ishii off his feet, only to kick him in the face. You don't do that to Ishii, who shrugs off the sleeper and suplexes Suzuki. Yano comes in and takes off the buckle pad again (Yano? Doing the same spots?), leaving Ishii and Suzuki to fight on the floor. The low blow is blocked but Ishii comes back in with a clothesline to knock Sabre into the cover to give Yano the pin at 9:42.

Rating: C. Ishii vs. Suzuki is always entertaining but egads I can't stand Yano. It's the same series of stuff over and over again and I really don't need to see any of it ever again. Sabre didn't get to do anything here and that's a waste of someone with a very unique set of talents. Oh and he even got to eat the pin from Yano. How lucky he is.

Suzuki beats up a Young Lion to blow off some steam.

Quick video on a meet and greet yesterday.

Hangman Page/Marty Scurll vs. Hiroshi Tanahashi/Kushida

Bullet Club vs. Taguchi Japan because everyone is in a stable around here. Kushida and Scurll start things off as JR starts listing UK wrestlers. Scurll gets taken down without much effort but manages to grab a quickly broken Octopus Hold. Back up and Kushida spins around Marty to get on his nerves so it's off to Tanahashi vs. Page.

Tanahashi starts cranking on the arm and scores with a middle rope crossbody. That means some air guitar, with JR saying he played his own earlier today. We'll move on from that as fast as possible with the Club sending both guys to the floor with Scurll hitting an apron kick, followed by Page's shooting star from the apron as well. They even beat up Ryusuke Taguchi for fun.

Back in and Kushida nails Marty with the handspring elbow, setting up the hot tag to Tanahashi. House is cleaned in a hurry but Tanahashi has to fight out of a crossface chickenwing. Instead Kushida comes back in and dropkicks Scurll down. A Sling Blade puts Page down as well and Kushida grabs the Hoverboard Lock on Scurll. Page sends Tanahashi to the floor though and comes in with the save off the Buckshot Lariat. The Rite of Passage ends Kushida at 9:52.

Rating: C. Perfectly fine tag match here and I can always go for more Kushida. Page continues to look like a star and that's going to serve him well in the future. I'm not sure how far he'll go in Japan, but the look alone should be enough to get him somewhere. Tanahashi continues to be the guy you can put into high profile spots and get something out of him even though his time on top is over, which is incredibly valuable.

Never Openweight Title: Hirooki Goto vs. Jeff Cobb

Cobb is challenging after asking for a title shot. Goto's entrance always feels epic and it's cool to see it in America for a change. Cobb powers him around to start so Goto pounds him in the back. That makes Cobb take his hair down and a hard shoulder rocks the champ. An overhead belly to belly shows off Cobb's power so Goto gets smart by low bridging him to the floor.

A toss into the post has Cobb's head bouncing off the steel (DING!) and it's off to the neck crank back inside. JR of course starts comparing Cobb to Steve Williams, because Williams played football at Oklahoma. Cobb fights up and hits a spinning belly to back for two but misses the standing moonsault.

Goto muscles him up for a suplex of his own but Cobb is right back with an Oklahoma Stampede. Dang maybe JR isn't as much of a rambling old man as I thought. The Tour of the Island (spinning powerslam) is countered into a sleeper from Goto as JR wants to know why Goto isn't working on Cobb's heavily taped shoulder. Instead it's the fireman's carry backbreaker for two and the GTR to retain the title at 12:17.

Rating: C-. There were some flashes of what could have been in there with Cobb looking like the monster (say an Aztec monster for example) he could

and should be. Goto was his usual self, making this feel more like a wasted opportunity than anything else. Cobb can be a heck of a performer and while he was getting close in there, it didn't feel like he was unleashed as he should have been.

Very quick video of the Young Bucks promising to retain their titles.

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

Los Ingobernables (Evil/Sanada) are challenging here after losing the titles to the Bucks last month. Sanada and Nick get things going and they knock the other's partners off the apron before even going at it. Instead everyone runs in and misses something, setting up a triple headscissors with Matt Scorpion Deathlocking Evil and turning everyone over for a near Human Centipede. A double dropkick has Sanada in trouble but Evil comes back in, allowing Sanada to superkick Matt in the hip.

It's Matt in trouble and a backsplash gives Evil two. We hit the bow and arrow hold as the announcers talk about how much punishment the Bucks can take. Fair enough actually. Nick dropkicks his way to freedom but Sanada runs around and pulls Matt off the apron. Good idea, though the hot tag brings Matt in about ten seconds later. Matt wastes no time in going for the Deathlock but his back spasms flare up again.

Nick is back up though and hits the slingshot X Factor on Evil, but Sanada catches his moonsault in a dragon sleeper. I'd still love to see someone just step aside ala Samoa Joe. That's broken up as well and Evil eats a pair of superkicks, only to have Sanada springboard in with a double dropkick. Back up and Sanada puts on a SWINGING DRAGON SLEEPER with Nick making a fast save.

The 450 gets two and Matt gets the Deathlock again. Sanada does a pretty awesome dramatic crawl for the ropes, which you wouldn't expect from a heel. The Bucks are sent into each other and it's Evil coming in with some German suplexes. Darkness Falls (sitout Samoan drop slam) gets two and there's a Magic Killer for two on Nick.

Matt makes a save but the referee takes the double superkick. Dang it they use these things too often. Evil brings in a chair and gets it

superkicked into his face. The Meltzer Driver takes too long though and Matt gets Tombstoned onto a chair...for two. On what planet is a Tombstone onto a chair a near fall? More superkicks set up the Meltzer Driver to end Evil at 16:05.

Rating: B. I liked the match (as usual the Bucks are much better in Japan) but there were a lot of superkicks and that Tombstone onto the chair only getting two was a lot to take. Throw in Matt being up all of thirty seconds later and it's a bit much to take. I wasn't expecting a title change here or anything so I can easily settle for a nice match between teams with chemistry.

New Japan will be back in America in September and November (twice).

And now, a fifteen minute intervention, complete with an ad for the merch stands.

JR and Barnett preview Hiromu Takahashi vs. Dragon Lee (JR: "I worry about their long term safety." Oh my indeed.).

Video on Jay White vs. Juice Robinson for the US Title. White accuses Robinson of spending too much time focusing on the fans and not enough going for the big wins.

Yesterday at the press conference, Cody talked about being criticized for his in-ring abilities. Kenny Omega said let's have a big match. Not exactly strong promos here but that's not what New Japan does (not a bad thing).

Video on Cody vs. Omega, focusing on Cody wanting to take over Bullet Club and Omega defending the team. Omega says this has happened before, showing clips of AJ Styles becoming IWGP World Champion and then getting kicked out of the team. The Young Bucks are on Omega's side but cost him the match against Cody at Supercard of Honor. Cody is obsessed with becoming champion so Kenny says bring it. Now this was very good and caught me up on the story while making me want to see the match.

The announcers recap the first half of the show.

Kazuchika Okada/Will Ospreay vs. Tetsuya Naito/Bushi

Chaos vs. Los Ingobernables and egads Okada looks strange without the title. Naito and Okada start things off and the fans are rather appreciative. Hang on though as Naito takes about a minute and a half before he's willing to lock up. Apparently the delay suits him as he sends Okada outside and rolls into the pose. JR compares it to the People's Elbow and...yeah I can actually get that one.

Bushi and Ospreay come in with a hurricanrana sending Bushi flying. Naito comes in with a dropkick as everything breaks down in a hurry. We settle down to Naito dropkicking Ospreay in the corner and Bushi coming back in for a choke with a shirt. Ospreay gets in an enziguri to set up the hot tag to Okada so things can slow down a bit. A high crossbody gets two on Naito but the Tombstone is escaped.

Okada misses the dropkick as well but Destino is countered. The Tombstone is countered again so it's the over the shoulder neckbreaker onto the knee instead to put Naito down. Bushi comes in and suckers Ospreay into a kick in the corner and gets two off the running Codebreaker. Okada comes back in for a missed Rainmaker on Naito but does hit that perfect dropkick. The Stormbreaker is enough to put Bushi away at 11:59.

Rating: D+. This uh, wasn't very good with neither team exactly seeming thrilled to be out there. It was a bunch of signature stuff and Ospreay finishing with his big move, which isn't exactly what you would want on a major shot. Instead it came off like a post show dark match with the guys putting in no more than the minimum effort. That being said, Okada and Naito at low speed is still better than most anyone else in the world.

Very quick video on Hiromu Takahashi.

IWGP Junior Heavyweight Title: Hiromu Takahashi vs. Dragon Lee

Lee is challenging and his CMLL World Light Heavyweight Title isn't on the line. These two are longtime rivals so the history is built in. Takahashi puts his Best of the Super Juniors trophy and Darryl (stuffed animal) on the announcers' table so Lee hits a running hurricanrana over the apron to kick start things. You know it's not slowing down already as a heck of a suicide dive sends Takahashi into the barricade.

Back in and Lee mocks Naito's pose, instantly turning him into the heel for the match. Or at least for the next few seconds. A very long dropkick puts Takahashi down but he's right up with a hurricanrana to send Lee outside. Takahashi followed with a top rope seated senton to take Lee down again. They head to the apron and then the top rope with Takahashi getting knocked backwards so his legs are tied in the ropes.

The top rope double stomp absolutely crushes Tanahashi but they get back inside at the same time. Back in and they trade a series of hard German suplexes to drop each other on their heads. They're nice enough to mix it up a bit with some kicks to the head and a double clothesline to put both guys down. They pull themselves to their feet and chop it out so hard that we pause for the sake of regaining feeling in their chests. Those loud chops never get old.

Lee charges into an overhead suplex into the corner and Takahashi has a scary look on his face. One heck of a C4 plants Takahashi but he reverses a suplex into a triangle choke. Lee can't powerbomb his way to freedom so he pulls Tanahashi up and throws him backwards in a suplex, dropping Tanahashi on his head. That would result in a neck injury that would put him on the injured list for about a year. Lee isn't done as he suplexes him into a powerbomb for two. Another powerbomb is countered into a Canadian Destroyer though and a very weak Time Bomb (understandable) finishes Lee at 16:20.

Rating: B+. Well that worked, save for the whole nearly broken neck and all that jazz. These guys were going nuts with the high spots and obviously have some serious chemistry together. Takahashi has found his groove and Lee is a heck of a luchador, making this about as good of a matchup as you can get. You could see the life go out of Takahashi at the end though and that's pretty understandable given how horrible the injury was.

We recap Juice Robinson vs. Jay White. Robinson is on a quest for his first title and White is trying to prove that he's the best around. White has also broken Robinson's hand to make this much more personal. Robinson on the other hand has promised to win the American title clad in red white and blue with stars on his nipples.

US Title: Jay White vs. Juice Robinson

Robinson is challenging and does indeed wear red, white and blue, along with a rather feathery hat. During the introductions, it's made clear that Robinson can be disqualified for using the cast on his left hand. They go straight for the brawling to start with Robinson sending him outside for a flip dive from the apron. White gets thrown into and then through a barricade before being taken back inside for the snap right hands. A belly to back suplex drops Robinson right back over the top and White whips him hard into the barricade, knocking it off again.

After a little mocking of/flipping off the crowd, it's time to start in on that bad hand. Robinson gets suplexed down again and we hit the Muta Lock. After a rope grab, Robinson is tied in the same ropes for some chops and a running shot to the head. Robinson gets the better of a chop off and hits some running corner clotheslines. A German suplex cuts Robinson off and it's time to crank on that bad left hand. A trip to the floor goes badly for Robinson, who is sent into the barricade again.

This time though it goes HARD into JR's ribs (Josh to White: "You done f***** up now.") and Josh gets up and into White's face. JR is wondering where his hat is and complains about the producers as White misses a chair shot to the hand. Robinson hits a good looking spinebuster to drive White into the apron but he trips Robinson face first onto the apron.

Back up and White can't hit the German suplex off the apron (because we've already had one horrible neck injury tonight) so he settles for a Russian legsweep instead. That's good for a nineteen count with the announcer getting anxious as he gets closer to the twenty count. Robinson is fine enough to hit a superplex for two but White punches him in the head over and over.

The Blade Runner is broken up but Robinson nearly runs over the referee. That's enough of a distraction for White to hit a low blow and since wrestling referees are very fragile, he's down long enough for Robinson to get in a cast shot. The jumping Unprettier gives Robinson two and White's back to back half nelson suplexes get the same. Another Blade Runner attempt is loaded up but Robinson reverses into a rollup for the

pin and the title at 23:22.

Rating: B. There was a great story here with both guys being willing to go as far as they could to leave with the title and hitting one big move after another to get there. The ending though as the hard gear shift, which is one of my favorite things to see in wrestling. They both used every big thing they could but couldn't put the other away, so Robinson used a surprise wrestling move to win. That's very cool and I always love seeing it.

Robinson is thrilled to win, even though JR thinks his name is Jay White.

We recap Omega vs. Cody. Omega has done everything he could to get here and says it represents pro wrestling. Cody though has been a thorn in his side though and is even trying to take over the Bullet Club. They fought earlier this year at Supercard of Honor where Cody won with an accidental assist from the Young Bucks. That was on Cody's turf though and now it's Omega's turn to have a home court advantage.

IWGP World Title: Kenny Omega vs. Cody

Omega is defending and I do love the way they show every champion before the match. It doesn't take long and is a nice nod to history. Cody has Brandi with him, but hang on as he needs to sit on a throne which is carried to the ring. Sounds like an homage to King Haku to me. Omega on the other hand has the Bucks in his corner. You can debate the importance of the IWGP World Title vs. the WWE Championship but sweet goodness that is a great looking belt.

The fans are behind Omega and they stare each other down at the bell. There's no contact in the first minute as Cody is too busy glaring down at the Bucks. We get a hard lockup to start with Cody going to the eyes to take over early on. Cody doesn't follow up though, instead pausing and then going for another lockup. Omega hits a hard shoulder but Cody's actually knocks the champ down. A hard chop stuns Cody but he's fine enough to uppercut Omega out to the floor. The brawl heads outside with the fans all over Cody with some very un-PG language.

Back in and the snap powerslam (Cody has been watching Goldust matches)

gets two as they're starting to get out of first gear. Omega's running jumping Fameasser sends Cody outside again, only to have him hide behind Brandi. They change places and Cody hits a big springboard dive (without any twisting and instead just crashing down onto Omega, which suits someone of Cody's size and style) but Omega sends him over the barricade and onto a table.

The double stomp through the table crushes Cody and let's set up a second table at ringside. Cody can get away before Omega tries the big dive and a table shot to the ribs doubles Omega over. Back in and Cody kicks at the leg before grabbing a cravate. A hurricanrana gets Omega out of trouble and sends Cody to the floor where he turns over the table in frustration. Apparently a wood lover, Omega takes him down with a big flip dive, followed by a springboard missile dropkick back inside.

The first (of many) V Trigger connects and there's the Snapdragon, only to have Cody come back with one of his own. The Figure Four goes on and Cody is quite a bit better at it than his daddy. Omega however is just as good as any Flair opponent and turns it over without much effort. Since we're out of things to do, it's time to bring in a ladder, which feels completely out of place here. Cody drops him ribs first onto the ladder, drawing the Bucks over to check on Omega.

With Omega on the table, Cody goes up the ladder in the ring (as JR rants about the guy who set up the barricades tonight) but Omega is right back up. The superplex through the table is teased but Cody doesn't feel like going through traction so he superplexes Omega back down. Cody grabs the belt but gets caught in a reverse hurricanrana. The ref gets bumped (of course) and it's time for Cody to pick the belt up again. He drops it and hits a messy Cross Rhodes for two (from a second referee) instead.

There's another V Trigger and a second connects in the corner. Make it four in about a minute but Cody blocks the fifth, showing that the first four weren't exactly impressive. Omega can't get him up for the One Winged Angel so he switches to a running powerbomb over the top onto the table....which doesn't break. That was good for some solid cringing. Cody is DONE so Brandi comes in to cover him up, allowing Cody to blast Omega with a clothesline. Two more knees have Cody in trouble and a Jay Driller

gets two. The One Winged Angel retains the title at 34:16.

Rating: B. It's good, but there's a far cry here than so much of what Omega is capable of doing. The tables were one thing but that ladder felt like an unnecessary crutch that was used for a single spot. Cody just doesn't seem capable of doing these bigger matches (save for one with Okada) and that hurts things when he's in this kind of a match. Omega was doing his thing here but it's not like the title ever felt like it was in any real danger. The first match going to Cody made this one obvious and it wasn't bad, but nothing great.

Post match everyone comes in to check on Cody and Omega with Cody leaving him to pose. Omega says he's proud of having his first title defense in front of these people in this historic building. We're all people though and we all deserve a second chance, including Cody. Omega does the goodnight and goodbye and goes up the ramp, where Haku and the Guerrillas of Destiny come out to celebrate. Massive posing and too sweeting ensue....and the Tongans jump Omega and the Bucks!

Tama Tonga pulls off his Bullet Club shirt to reveal a Firing Squad (new stable name) shirt. Tonga Loa and Haku have them as well as the destruction continues. Adam Page and Marty Scurll run in but get beaten down too as Tonga shouts that Omega did this. Chase Owens and Yujiro Takahashi come in and get taken out as well. The bell keeps ringing, which JR thinks is just annoying the Tongans even more.

Cody staggers back out and gets handed a chair, which he uses on the Tongans. That lasts all of five seconds before he gets beaten down, including a spike piledriver on a chair. The Tongans leave, saying there is no leader of Bullet Club. In the ring, Cody helps Omega to his feet for the big hug. In other words, Bullet Club is fine. At least this part of it. The Club poses on the stage and the announcers wrap up the night. It's kind of odd to see the team get beaten down and then stand up for the focus like that. Really good closing angle here, which helped make up for a main event that didn't live up to its hype.

A quick highlight package closes things out.

Overall Rating: B-. The show was trying hard and it had its strong

points, but there were several points that didn't work so well. The first few matches were completely skippable and the big tag match was disappointing. There are some very good points though, with Lee vs. Takahashi being entertaining, the main event/post match angle, the Bucks' match and the US Title match all being strong.

It's a good show that is nowhere near the level of their big pay per views, though it's not supposed to be that kind of a show. New Japan's expansion is taking its time, but having a good show like this is going to be a strong starting point. Things are going to start picking up in the next few months with the G1 Climax and that's going to be a lot of fun. Omega as the World Champion is the right call and if they keep things going in the right direction, I'm curious to see where things are going, especially in America.

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