

Wrestle Kingdom 14 Night Two: That's More Like It



IMG Credit: New Japan Pro Wrestling

Wrestle Kingdom 14 Night Two

Date: January 5, 2020

Location: Tokyo Dome, Tokyo, Japan

Attendance: 30,063

Commentators: Kevin Kelly, Chris Charlton, Gino Gambino

It's the second of two nights here and that means we're in for the real main events of the whole show. This time around it's going to be about the World Title again as Tetsuya Naito tries to get back to the top against champion Kazuchika Okada. Other than that, it's Jushin Thunder Liger's retirement match and that's going to be an emotional one. Let's get to it.

[Here are Night One's results if you need a recap.](#)

As usual, I don't follow New Japan incredibly closely so there is a good chance I won't know every storyline point of the show. Please bear with me as I'm mostly going off what commentary tells me.

Never Openweight Six Man Tag Team Titles: Gauntlet Match

Five team gauntlet with the Most Violent Players (Togi Makabe/Toru Yano)/Ryusuke Taguchi defending and entering last. Bullet Club (Bad Luck

Fale/Yujiro Takahashi/Chase Owens) is in at #1 and Chaos (Tomohiro Ishii/Yoshi-Hashi/Robbie Eagles) in at #2 to get things going. Chaos jumps them before the bell and the fight is on in a hurry. Fale loads up a Razor's Edge but Hashi slips out and it's time for the rapid fire superkicks on the monster.

A running clothesline puts Fale down and the rapid fire offense continues. The Club gets smart by focusing on Ishii but Eagles is right back to wreck things. Owens actually wins a slugout with Ishii off a clothesline and a jumping knee to the head but Eagles is back in for the save. The clothesline and brainbuster give Ishii the pin on Owens for the first elimination at 3:40.

Suzuki-Gun (Taichi/Yoshinobu Kanemaru/El Desperado) are in at #3 and the brawl is on in a hurry again. Ishii gets caught alone and tries as much as he can but eventually gets kicked down, setting up a spear from Desperado. Eagles and Hashi come back in for the save but it's Taichi taking off his pants (no Garza, no all caps) to....well very little really.

Ishii clotheslines him down but can't follow up as they actually bother to go with the tagging for a change. Granted it lasts all of ten seconds but it did in fact happen so we can call these Tag Titles. In the chaos (pun....yeah we'll say intended), Eagles rolls up Kanemaru for the pin at 8:32.

Los Ingobernables de Japon (Evil/Shingo Takagi/Bushi) are in at #4 and of course they brawl in a hurry again. Eagles spinwheel kicks Bushi but Bushi is back with a dropkick and a Spinarooni back up to take over. We settle down to Evil taking Eagles down into the corner for the Bronco Buster and a near fall. Shingo gets caught in a snapmare driver (cool) and it's back to Hashi to pick up the pace.

A running dropkick to the back gets two on Shingo but he's back up for the slugout with Hashi. Ishii and Evil come in for the slugout and Ishii's bad night continues as Hashi has to make another save. Everything Is Evil is broken up and Ishii nails a headbutt. Instead it's Darkness Falls to finish Ishii at 16:00 (with some confusion as to whether it was two or three).

Ishii keeps brawling with Evil as the champs are in at #5 to complete the field. Yano wastes no time in trying the rollups so Bushi kicks him in the head. Serves him right. Shingo gets two off a suplex and it's Bushi coming back in to work on the nerve hold. That's broken up and Makabe comes in to start the hard hitting.

Makabe and Shingo slug it out this time with Makabe getting the better of the clothesline off. Taguchi comes in for the rolling suplexes and a double chickenwing faceplant gets two on Shingo. The ankle lock is broken up and Bushi gets in a mist shot, setting up Made In Japan (pumphandle driver) to give Shingo the pin and the titles at 23:25.

Rating: C-. I've never been a fan of these matches but I get the point of them. I'd rather see these than the multiple eight man tags, which do little more than filling in time on a long show. These titles certainly don't mean very much, but they're something that exist and a way to get a bunch of people on the show. It's a fun opening, though dropping a team might have been nice.

The opening video is the usual card rundown format and it does its usual good job of making me want to see the show.

Ryu Lee/Hiromu Takahashi vs. Jushin Thunder Liger/Naoki Sano

This is Liger's retirement match, Sano is one of his oldest rivals, and Yoshiaki Fujiwara (yes THAT Fujiwara and Liger's trainer) is here as well. Lee is better known as Dragon Lee and has the ROH TV Title with him. Takahashi looks near tears as Liger makes his big entrance. I'm not even the biggest Liger fan (respect him but he hasn't had a big impact on me as a fan) but this is an incredible moment.

Liger and Takahashi lock up to start with the ropes giving us a break. It works so well that they do it again, followed by Liger pulling him into the surfboard (it's nice to see him playing the hits one last time). Lee comes in but Tanahashi knocks Sano off the apron and Liger gets beaten down in a rather heelish act. We settle down to Lee cranking on both arms at once, setting up Tanahashi's Fujiwara armbar.

Liger tries to come back with chops but gets chopped right back down,

only to have Liger snap off the tilt-a-whirl backbreakers. Sano comes in to kick away so Lee takes off his shirt and starts the slugout. Liger and Tanahashi take their places for their own slugout with Tanahashi getting the better of it. A powerbomb brings Tanahashi out of the corner though and it's time to slap away at the back of Tanahashi's head.

Lee's big running flip dive hits Tanahashi by mistake and it's Liger getting two off a powerbomb. A Shotei drops Tanahashi for two with Lee making the save and hitting a suicide dive on Sano. Tanahashi's Falcon Arrow gets two on Liger and it's a pair of running knees to the head for the same. The Time Bomb is countered into a sunset flip for two on Tanahashi, who is right back up with a running clothesline. Now the Time Bomb connects to retire Liger for good at 12:18.

Rating: C. Just like yesterday, this wasn't about the wrestling at all and was all about the moment and the big feeling. That's all it was supposed to be and there is something appropriate about Liger's career ending with something involving time running out. Liger is a legend of the highest degree and there's nothing I can say that will make this appropriate enough. I'm very glad he got this kind of a moment and him going out on his back to a young up and comer is as logical as it gets for him. Not even a bad match either.

The video cuts out a bit and we're clipped to Liger and Sano walking up the aisle, posing with Fujiwara, and leaving like it's any other match. That seems to fit him in a way.

Junior Heavyweight Tag Team Titles: Roppongi 3K vs. Bullet Club

The Club (El Phantasmo/Taiji Ishimori) are defending and Rocky Romero is with the challengers. 3K jumps them before the bell with a double dropkick to the floor, setting up the big flip dive to take the champs down again. Back in and the champs are beaten up again, meaning it's already time for a breather on the floor. We settle down to Phantasmo kneeling Sho in the back to put 3K in trouble for a change.

Ishimori's sliding German suplex drops Sho again and there's a knee to the back to make it worse. Phantasmo walks the ropes for a moonsault back rake (that's a new one), setting up a Lionsault on Sho and a suicide dive

on Romero to really rub it in. Sho gets tied in the Tree of Woe and that means some sliding dropkicks to the face and a double standing on the crotch. Yoh gets tied in the same corner for a double crotch stomp but Sho gets in a spear for a breather.

The hot tag brings in Sho to send both champs to the floor for the dive onto both of them. Back in and Ishimori hits a springboard spinning kick to the face but Sho is right back up with rolling German suplexes, including one to both champs at once. Phantasma is back up with a spinning torture rack neckbreaker to give Ishimori two more.

The champs try their own version of 3K (3D) but Sho reverses into a Canadian Destroyer to plant Phantasma instead. Ishimori and Yoh are knocked outside, leaving Phantasma to hit a Styles Clash for two on Sho. Romero breaks up a belt shot so Phantasma hits Sho low....to no effect because there's a cup in play. A piledriver into a dragon suplex drops Phantasma and a spike arm trap piledriver gives us new champions at 14:10.

Rating: B-. It's so weird as I couldn't stand 3K when they were the Tempura Boyz in Ring of Honor and now they're some of the most consistently entertaining guys in this company. They're very smooth in the ring and feel like stars instead of coming off as annoying guys who just happen to be there because New Japan tells them to. Good match here and I had another good time, as I always do with 3K.

Post match Romero celebrates with them, seemingly as the mastermind behind the cup idea.

We recap Zack Sabre Jr. defending the British Heavyweight Title against Sanada. Sabre is a cocky yet incredibly talented champion but Sanada has beaten him a few times to set this up. Sanada has never won a singles title in NJPW and wants to prove himself, even though it's the Rev Pro Title.

British Heavyweight Title: Sanada vs. Zack Sabre Jr.

Sabre is defending and starts in on the arm as he is known to do. Sanada keeps flipping out of the armbar so they head to the mat and wind up with

a staredown, as seems appropriate. A quick pinfall reversal sequence barely gets a one apiece and it's another standoff as they seem evenly matched, which doesn't sit well with Sabre.

Sanada gets pulled down into a crossarm choke but reverses into one of his own as Sabre just can't take over here. Sabre bails to the floor and needs a breather as Sanada is in his head here. Back in and Sabre can't even keep an abdominal stretch as Sanada reverses into one of his own, only to have Sabre crank on both arms at once with the modified Rings of Saturn. That's broken up with a boot on the ropes but Sabre has his confidence back. Sanada kicks the leg out and twists the knee around for a bonus.

Sabre bails to the floor so Sanada follows with a slingshot dive, setting up Skull End back inside. The moonsault misses so Sabre kicks him in the head, only to bang up the leg even more. They go back to the pinfall reversal sequence for some near falls until Sabre gets two off the European Clutch. That's countered into the dragon sleeper but Sabre flips up again, this time into another European Clutch to retain at 12:33.

Rating: B. I wanted more from this one as their counters were getting awesome in there. Sabre continues to be one of the most entertaining people in all of wrestling as he can just do whatever he wants out there and make it look as smooth as anyone ever has. I'm not sure I wouldn't have had Sanada take the title here, but I'm not going to argue watching Sabre do something like that because he's just so awesome at what he does.

US Title: Juice Robinson vs. Jon Moxley

Moxley is defending and I'll only mention him as a champion despite Juice being half of the Tag Team Champions. This is a pretty long time coming as Moxley initially targeted Robinson and won the title last year. This is the rematch after Moxley lost and regained the title thanks to weather and at the expense of Lance Archer. Robinson jumps him to start (a common theme tonight) and sends Moxley into the barricade before he can even get inside.

Moxley sets up a chair at ringside and gets sent face first into it

because that's how chairs work around the world. They get in for the first time with Moxley sending him over the top again, meaning the chairs can work this time. Back in and Moxley hammers away, bows to the referee for daring to suggest that's not fair, and then puts on a camel clutch. That's broken up so Moxley drops a running elbow for two but Robinson is back up with a powerbomb for his own near fall.

The Juice snap jabs are cut off in a hurry with Moxley slapping on a Figure Four. That's broken up in the traditional way so Moxley wraps the leg around the post a few times. The Hart Breaker goes on for a few seconds (as it tends to do) but Moxley would rather put a chair around Juice's neck.

A running shot with a chair is cut off by a left hand and Robinson gets two off a Jackhammer. Pulp Friction is countered into a release German suplex but the Death Rider is countered into a rollup to give Juice two. Moxley tells Juice to hit him and the slugout is on again. Moxley's running knee just fires Juice up enough for some hard left hands. Pulp Friction is countered again though and it's the Death Rider to retain the title at 12:49.

Rating: C+. These two hit each other rather hard and I'm still surprised by how much better Robinson is. I know I see that every year but I still see CJ Parker in him at times, which is cleared out as soon as I watch his matches. You can see how much more fun Moxley is having here though and that's what matters most for him. He just wasn't clicking in WWE at the end and Moxley seems a lot more appropriate for him than Dean Ambrose.

Post match here's Minoru Suzuki to go after Moxley and the fight is on. Suzuki grabs the Gotch style piledriver and talks about how he's the king of pro wrestling, plus the king of the United States. This would be your HOKEY SMOKE THEY'RE REALLY DOING THIS moment of the show and it's working as usual.

We recap Kenta vs. Hirooki Goto. Kenta is the horrible jerk who has been needling Goto for not being tough enough. Goto wants to fight him for honor and the title.

Never Openweight Title: Hirooki Goto vs. Kenta

Kenta is defending and gets jumped before the bell as Goto is not playing around here. A bunch of shots to the back get two and we hit the chinlock early. Kenta is back up with a kick to the face and some whips into the barricade to put Goto in trouble for a change. A DDT on the ramp knocks Goto silly for a nineteen count so Kenta throws him outside again.

This time Goto is back in for a kick to the back and a Too Sweet sign, setting up a chinlock. Kenta calmly kicks away and shrugs a bit, only to walk into a discus clothesline. They trade forearms in the corner until a HARD forearm drops Kenta in a heap. Kenta is back up with a powerslam and the tornado DDT throat snap across the top. More kicks to the head fire Goto up so Kenta plants him with another DDT.

Goto comes back with the fireman's carry backbreaker, only to get pulled into the LeBell Lock. A rope is reached so Kenta drops him with a hanging DDT (popular move in this match). The running knee connects for two but Kenta can't hit Go To Sleep (this guy is a create a wrestler come to life) so Goto headbutts him down. They take turns screaming at each other after some clotheslines but it's Goto reversing a slap into a failed GTR attempt. GTW connects for two on Kenta instead so now it's the GTR to win the title at 16:14.

Rating: B-. This was a rather surprising one as Kenta was best known as the one with no personality in NXT but here he was a great heel and I wanted to see him get punched in the mouth. Goto has never been my favorite but it was nice to see him fight like this. Good match as Kenta impressed far more in one match than he did in almost his entire NXT run.

Here are the upcoming big shows, including the G1 Climax, which is being moved to October due to the Olympics.

Jay White vs. Kota Ibushi

Basically the third place match in the Double Gold Dash and White has Gedo with him. White heads to the floor to start, as is his custom, so Gedo can offer a distraction. That doesn't work either as Ibushi catches the invading White with kicks tot he ribs and a standing moonsault for

two. White scores with some forearms though and an ax handle knocks Ibushi off the apron and hard into the barricade.

Another whip sends Ibushi chest first into the barricade to make it even worse and it's time to choke back inside. The chinlock makes it worse, as White gets in some trash talk for a bonus. Ibushi fights up though and snaps off a hurricanrana to the floor, meaning it's a big slingshot dive for a bonus. Back in and a springboard missile dropkick connects as Ibushi starts getting more comfortable with the high flying.

White grabs a DDT and Death Valley Driver for two each but Ibushi is fine enough to hit a kneeling Tombstone to put them both down. Ibushi knocks him into the corner and gets that serious look on his face as this is about to get more violent. A forearm knocks White down so Ibushi pulls him up so White can get in his own forearm. White's shot has no effect as Ibushi knocks him back down even harder.

Ibushi charges into a Downward Spiral though and a German suplex knocks him sillier. The Kiwi Crusher gets two and a snap Saito suplex puts Ibushi on his head again. With Ibushi half out of it, White completes the knock out with a super swinging Rock Bottom. Just being knocked cold doesn't matter around here though as Ibushi is right back with a V Trigger for the double knockdown. A bridging German suplex gives Ibushi two and there's Kinshasa for the same.

White pulls him into the referee though, because White matches have a lot of screwiness. Gedo's chair shot has no effect on Ibushi and a single shot to the chest drops him. The sitout Last Ride knocks White silly for no count because the referee is still down. The big knee looks to finish but Gedo pulls the referee at two. Gedo tries to bring in some brass knuckles but it's a ruse for White to hit Ibushi in the face with a chair. That and the brass knuckles shot have Ibushi down and it's the Blade Runner to give White the pin at 24:58.

Rating: B-. I wasn't feeling this one as much and seeing Ibushi lose again took something out of the show. Ibushi can go to a different level when he hits that point when he feels like a force of nature but then he just lost again, this time to a bunch of cheating that felt out of place

in New Japan. I keep thinking Ibushi will get his chance but losing twice in a row at Wrestle Kingdom doesn't give me the most confidence.

Post match White hits another Blade Runner just to be evil.

We recap Chris Jericho vs. Hiroshi Tanahashi. There isn't much of a story here, as Jericho just showed up to challenge Tanahashi to the latest dream match. Tanahashi accepted, Jericho attacked him, and then offered Tanahashi an AEW World Title shot if Tanahashi could win.

Hiroshi Tanahashi vs. Chris Jericho

Non-title. Jericho's not great physique is on full display here but with that kind of star power, what difference does it really make? They trade poses to start and circle each other a bit before it's a trip to the mat. That means a staredown, so Tanahashi throws in some air guitar to mess with the rock star. Tanahashi works on an armbar and cranks away, setting up the middle rope spinning crossbody to put Jericho down. Tanahashi even does the ARROGANT COVER with a COME ON BABY!

Jericho doesn't stand for gimmick infringement and throws Tanahashi outside for a whip into the barricade. A DDT onto an announcers' table makes it even worse as Jericho is in full on brawling mode (which is quite the positive). Back in and Jericho drops a middle rope knee for two and a butterfly backbreaker messes with the back some more. Jericho goes up top, plays his own air guitar, and misses a frog splash. The comeback is on with a flying forearm to Jericho, but he pulls the referee in the way of a splash in the corner.

Jericho gets in a low blow and a whipping with the weightlifting belt as commentary is finally back after Jericho cleared them out earlier. Tanahashi avoids a charge in the corner and hits the middle rope flip splash for two. With Jericho down on the floor, Tanahashi hits a high crossbody and they're both in need of a breather.

That's only good for a nineteen on Jericho and it's a dragon screw legwhip over the rope on the way back in. More legwhips have Jericho in big trouble but he gets the knee up to block the High Fly Flow. The Lionsault connects but the banged up knee means it's only good for two.

Jericho grabs the Walls and cranks back, only to have Tanahashi crawl through the legs to escape.

A Sling Blade looks to set up a high crossbody but Jericho pulls him into the Codebreaker for two more. The Judas Effect misses though and Tanahashi hits his own Codebreaker for his own two. Jericho gets the Walls again but this time it's reversed into Twist and Shout. Another Sling Blade gives Tanahashi another two and the high crossbody connects, only to be reversed into the Walls to make Tanahashi tap at 22:27.

Rating: B+. I know Jericho is older and not in quite the shape that he used to be in but sweet goodness he can still have a heck of a match with the right opponent. Maybe that is due to the atmosphere or just the amount of star power that Jericho can bring but it works very well. These two beat each other up and I wanted to see if Tanahashi could pull it off. Jericho feels like a legend (which he is) and that shows very strongly on the big stage.

We recap the title for title main event. Tetsuya Naito has been World Champion before and is now back to prove he can do it again and claim his destiny as the star of the company. Kazuchika Okada is the greatest World Champion ever though and Naito has to overcome a lot of history (losing the title to Okada in his first defense, having his World Title match be voted as the main event) to reach the top again. It's actually a heck of a story and commentary explains the whole thing rather well.

IWGP Heavyweight Title/Intercontinental Title: Kazuchika Okada vs. Tetsuya Naito

Title for title and Naito is serious tonight with the white suit. They stare at each other for a good while and there is no contact for the first two minutes. A lockup goes into the corner and Okada taps him on the chest. Okada takes him down with a running elbow but they're still firmly in first gear. A DDT gives Naito one and we hit a pretty quickly broken chinlock. Naito slugs away and hits a running dropkick to the back, setting up a slingshot dropkick in the corner.

A neckbreaker off the apron to the floor drops Okada again and a regular version gets two back inside. Naito wraps his legs around Okada's

shoulders to crank on the neck even more, followed by a cravate to stay on it. Okada boots him down and hits a flapjack, setting up White Noise onto the knee. A top rope elbow gives Okada two but it's way too early for a Rainmaker.

Naito is back with a spinebuster but Okada is right back up with a running dropkick to put them both down. It's Naito getting up first and heading to the top, meaning Okada dropkicks him right back out to the floor. Naito's knee goes into the barricade and it's banged up pretty badly, calling back to the injury it took last night. Naito drops him knee first onto the announcers' table as well and Naito has to dive back in.

Okada is ready with a missile dropkick for two but Naito uses the good knee to hit a springboard tornado DDT. A super reverse hurricanrana gives Naito two more but Okada blocks Destino as things crank up a lot. Destino is blocked again and Okada hits a dropkick, only to have Naito grab Destino for two.

Another dropkick gives us a double knockdown and we have a chance to look at the title belt. They slug it out from their knees and then from their feet with Naito not backing down an inch. Okada hits a discus lariat for two and it's the jumping Tombstone into the Rainmaker for two. The frustration is setting in so Okada starts ramming the knee into the mat.

Okada grabs the wrist and hits some clotheslines (Rainmakers, without the spin or the big step, because again, it's a clothesline) but the big version is countered into Destino for two more. A corkscrew moonsault gets two on Okada and they're both down again. Destino is countered so Naito drops him on his head, setting up Destino for the pin and the title at 35:40.

Rating: A. You might remember earlier when I said that I didn't know a lot of the stories coming into this show. This match, with commentary helping, showed me exactly what they were going for and I wanted to see Naito pull it off. He seems more compelling than Okada, who is an incredible performer but we've seen him do this for so long now. It's an outstanding match and I got into the drama though, which says a lot given

how little I knew coming in. Outstanding storytelling here with some great action included.

Post match they both stagger up and Okada is helped to the back. Naito grabs the mic and offers a rematch, with Okada raising his fist up. Naito is presented with both belts and says he knows what he'll do with them. I think he says a catchphrase before promising to move forward into the future. He puts over Los Ingobernables...and Kenta runs in to jump him and ruin his moment, sending commentary completely over the edge. Kenta lays him out and sits down on Naito's chest to pose with the belts. Cue Bushi to chase Kenta off, sending Kenta up the aisle to taunt the fans as Naito is helped out to end the show.

Overall Rating: A-. I'm not even surprised at this show being great anymore. I've gotten used to these guys tearing the house down when the lights are on bright and that's what they did again here. There might not have been as many blow away matches as in previous years, but this show felt huge and that's it lived up to its hype. Definitely see the main event as it's the best storytelling I can remember seeing from New Japan and one of the only times I felt like I got the long, epic story they were going for (not their fault as it's designed to be built over years, not with a single show a year).

This felt more like a Wrestle Kingdom and made me think that we didn't need the two night structure. While there was some great wrestling on Night One, it felt like a show that didn't need to exist to do Night Two, which is where the important stuff all paid off. They're both outstanding shows and worth watching, but this is the only one that you need to watch. What mattered most was how big it felt though and that's where Wrestle Kingdom tends to shine.

As usual, I won't be watching the company full time but this has been must see wrestling for a long time now and I don't see that changing. It could be interesting to see where Naito can take the company long term, though you can almost guarantee Okada will get the belt back as he has a long, long career ahead of him. Couple the great main event with the emotion of the Liger finale and this hits on multiple levels. Check it out, plus one or two matches from Night One.

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