

Dynamite – March 20, 2024: The Maple Syrup Of Shows

Dynamite

Date: March 20, 2024

Location: Coca Cola Coliseum, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Commentators: Excalibur, Taz, Tony Schiavone

We're north of the border this week and that means a big title match featuring some Canadians. In this case we have Adam Copeland challenging Christian Cage for the TNT Title in an I Quit match. Other than that, Kazuchika Okada is challenging for the Continental Crown, as the titles unified in the Continental Classic are already coming undone.

[Here is Collision if you need a recap.](#)

Opening sequence.

Here is Mercedes Mone for a chat. She is so glad to be here and last week was so amazing. This is what she wants to do, but her dream was almost taken away from her ten months ago. We see a highlight reel of things she has done in and out of the ring before Mone talks about how she isn't here to lead a revolution, because she has done that before. Instead, she is here to lead a GLOBAL revolution (that might not have been the best wording).

She wants to face some people and hits the catchphrase to wrap it up, but here are Julia Hart and Skye Blue. Mone fights them off but Willow Nightingale and Kris Statlander run in with chairs for the save. The villains leave via blackout but Nightingale is still holding up the chair behind Mone. That gives us a standoff and egads standing in the ring talking is not Mone's strong suit.

The Young Bucks mock Alex Marvez for not speaking Japanese to

Kazuchika Okada. They won't be ringside for the Continental Title match tonight but they will be on the headsets producing.

Continental Title: Kazuchika Okada vs. Eddie Kingston

Kingston is defending and only one of the three titles are on the line. They start slowly and take their time to lock up until Kingston hits a hard chop. Kingston knocks him out to the floor and the chase is on, with Okada jumping him on the way back in. Okada starts working on the arm and Kingston is down as we see the Bucks sitting next to Tony Khan producing the show. That great dropkick puts Kingston down again and we take a break.

Back with Kingston hitting a suplex and grabbing an STO for a needed breather. Kingston strikes away and hits another suplex but gets caught with the dropkick to put him back down. The elbow misses for Okada though and Kingston hits the spinning backfist for two. Back up and Kingston has to block the discus lariat before knocking Okada down again. A running clothesline scores for Kingston, whose half and half suplex is broken up with a rake to the eyes. An enziguri takes Okada down but another spinning backfist misses. Okada hits a powerslam, followed by the Rainmaker for the pin and the title at 15:50.

Rating: B-. That was a pretty definitive win for Okada and so much for Kingston's big run. There's no shame in losing to a star like Okada, but egads they're really splitting up the titles they unified less than three months ago. Odds are the NJPW Strong Title goes away, leaving the Continental Title and the ROH Title, which makes the unified deal feel all the more worthless in the first place. Also: we are 16 days away from ROH's Supercard Of Honor and the TV, Tag Team and World Champions have all lost on AEW TV this month alone.

Post match Pac comes out for the staredown and we likely have a Dynasty match.

Swerve Strickland suggests Samoa Joe is scared of him because of the chain. We're in Toronto tonight and he wants to fight so the open challenge is on.

Willow Nightingale/Kris Statlander are ready for their street fight with Julia Hart and Skye Blue tonight. Mercedes Mone interrupts and says she has Statlander's back tonight. Willow looks to say something but Mone says she's done enough. Stokely Hathaway brings up Nightingale breaking Mone's leg and Statlander isn't pleased. I would sincerely hope they aren't trying to turn Willow heel out of all this. Statlander sure, but Willow feels like the definition of someone born to be good.

Chris Jericho vs. Hook

Non-title and Hook suplexes him down at the bell. We pause for the referee to check on Jericho before he fires off some chops. A reverse t-bone suplex drops Jericho for two as it's pretty much one sided to start. Jericho cuts him off with a shot to the head but a string of German suplexes drop Jericho again.

We take a break and come back with Jericho still being suplexed and Hook strolling around the ring. Jericho finally reverses a suplex and hits some shoulders but Hook suplexes him again. A big boot "hits" for Jericho and he scores with the Lionsault for a delayed two. Back up and Jericho tries a suplex but instead kind of drops Hook on his face. They go up top but Hook grabs Redrum, which has Jericho down in the middle. Jericho slips out and throws some VERY slow punches until Hook reverses into a cradle for the pin at 10:51.

Rating: C-. Well that didn't go well for Jericho, and I'm not sure where this is leading. Given what happened with Jericho when Powerhouse Hobbs squashed him, I can't imagine it's going to go well for Hook, but he was basically Brock Lesnar to Jericho's John Cena out there. The Redrum should have been the

finish, but odds are we're going to be seeing these two together for a lot longer.

Adam Cole is furious about Wardlow losing last week and says it is Wardlow's job to keep the gold in the Undisputed Kingdom. Don't screw it up.

Post break Chris Jericho says he wanted to face Hook, who showed him a lot tonight. Hook is as much of a bad man as people say he is and next week, Jericho will have a proposition for him.

Here is Will Ospreay for a chat. He was a little bit of a naughty boy the last time he was here and now he is here for the betterment of AEW. Ospreay apologizes for what he did to Kenny Omega in Toronto, but in return for his elite wrestling he needs...some of that maple syrup! As for Bryan Danielson, he hopes that you saw him face Katsuyori Shibata on Collision. When Ospreay went over to Japan ("Where you wanted to be a big star."), he saw Danielson's shoes, but they weren't big enough for Ospreay.

What Danielson did in Japan was great, but Ospreay elevated wrestling over there. Ospreay lists off his accomplishments in Japan and now he's ready to prove he can walk in his shoes. He met Shibata before but now he has cats, dogs and a mortgage to pay. The challenge is mad for next week and since Tony Khan is apparently watching the show from Shibata's house, the match is made official about ten seconds later.

Video on Adam Copeland vs. Christian Cage.

Mariah May/Toni Storm vs. Deonna Purrazzo/Thunder Rosa

It's a brawl to start with May taking Purrazzo down so it's off to Storm. Rosa comes in to strike away in the corner and a sliding clothesline gets two on Storm. A Luther distraction lets Storm knock Rosa outside though and we take a break. Back with Purrazzo striking away at May but not being able to get

the Fujiwara armbar. Instead Purrazzo boots her in the ace but Rosa tags herself in, which Purrazzo doesn't like. Rosa comes in to plant May but gets German suplexed by Storm. The hip attack connects, only to have Rosa roll Storm up for the pin at 7:10.

Rating: C. Again, a seven minute match does not need to have a commercial in the middle. The ending came out of nowhere but Rosa vs. Storm is a fresh match as we shift away from Purrazzo challenging. May seems to be the long term goal, but Rosa, who never lost the title in the first place, will do just fine for now.

Swerve Strickland vs. The Butcher

Swerve starts fast by knocking him into the corner, setting up the middle rope elbow to the back. A half nelson backbreaker puts Swerve down though and Butcher hits him in the face a few times. Back up and Swerve kicks him down, setting up the House Call. Butcher sits down for a good while, allowing Swerve to hit the Swerve Stomp into something like a short arm scissors for the tap at 3:22.

Rating: C. This was perfectly acceptable booking as Butcher is just established enough to make Swerve work but not enough to be a threat to him. Swerve took a few shots but fought back and won clean. It's exactly what it needed to be and I can always go for something logical and efficient.

Post match Swerve grabs his chain and says he keeps thinking about using it to choke Samoa Joe out. Every week, Joe can send security after him and Swerve will keep beating them up until Joe gives him what he wants. Cue Joe to interrupt, saying contrary to what Swerve believes, Joe beat him at Revolution. Joe says he has learned what to do with someone like Swerve: give him exactly what he wants.

Cue Don Callis of all people to interrupt, saying Konosuke Takeshita and Swerve Strickland have the same amount of wins.

Takeshita is undefeated outside of the Don Callis Family so maybe he needs to show Swerve whose house this is. Swerve is in to face Takeshita, and then he's coming for Joe. Yay more Callis N Pals.

TNT Title: Adam Copeland vs. Christian Cage

Cage is defending in an I Quit match. Copeland starts fast and they go out to the floor with the brawl heading into the crowd. Copeland grabs a Boston Bruins jersey to put over Cage before grabbing a Toronto Maple Leafs jersey for himself (the fans approve). Cage is knocked around even more as we take a break. Back with Copeland bridging a ladder between the announcers' table and the barricade. An Edge O Matic onto the ladder has Cage in more trouble and we get a breather.

The ladder is turned upside down inside, where Cage is dropped ribs first onto said ladder. A table is set up against the barricade but Cage breaks up the spear attempt. The busted open Copeland is staggered and Cage hits a dive off the top to send him through the table. Back in and Copeland is catapulted into a ladder but still won't quit. A quick Grindhouse is broken up and they both try spears at the same time for a double knockdown.

We take a break and come back with Cage being launched off the stage but cue Mother Wayne with a hockey stick to hit Copeland low. Cage sticks away inside and it's time for a barbed wire chair. The Conchairto is loaded up but Copeland moves just in time. Neither can hit a Killswitch onto the ladder so Copeland hits him with the hockey stick. The Grindhouse, with the stick in Cage's mouth, gets an incoherent answer so Copeland uses the draw string from his tights.

Cue the Patriarchy for the save but cue Matt Menard and Daniel Garcia for the save. Copeland sets up a ladder and dives onto the Patriarchy before handcuffing them in the corner. Mother Wayne runs away and cage gets speared down, meaning he can be

cuffed as well. A low blow isn't enough for Cage to quit so Copeland kicks him several more times. Spike (the 2x4 with nails) is pulled out for a major low blow...and the video goes off for a second (presumably the end of Dynamite/the start of Rampage), only to come back with Copeland loading up a shot to the head. That's enough for Cage to quit at 25:43.

Rating: B. There was quite a bit here (to say the least) but it feels like a nice cap on the whole feud. Copeland getting the win in what very well may be the final match between the two in his hometown is a good way to go, with the rapid fire low blows in the corner feeling like the kind of humor these two would love. At the same time, I can't help but think the lure of a ladder/TLC match will be too much for the two of them/AEW to resist.

Overall Rating: B-. This was a show where the opener and main event bookended the show well, but the wrestling in the middle left a good bit to be desired. Mone was still a focal point here and does come off as a star but we still need to see what they have planned for her first feud. Other than that, you had some things teased for the coming weeks plus Dynasty, but this was all about the main event and it worked well enough.

Results

Kazuchika Okada b. Eddie Kingston – Rainmaker

Hook b. Chris Jericho – Rollup

Deonna Purrazzo/Thunder Rosa b. Mariah May/Toni Storm – Rollup to Storm

Swerve Strickland b. The Butcher – Short arm scissors

Adam Copeland b. Christian Cage when Cage quit

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Wrestle Kingdom 17: Deja New Japan?

Wrestle Kingdom XVII

Date: January 4, 2023

Location: Tokyo Dome, Tokyo, Japan

Commentators: Kevin Kelly, Chris Charlton, Gino Gambino

It's time to go back to New Japan for a promotion that I have not looked at since last year's Wrestle Kingdom. As tends to be the case with this show, I'm coming in mostly blind, save for knowing the wrestlers involved. The main event is Jay White defending the IWGP World Title against Kazuchika Okada, who he took the title from back in June. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Boltin Oleg vs. Ryohei Oiwa

This is a three minute exhibition and Oleg, an amateur champion, is making his debut. They go with the grappling to start and Oleg powers him down, followed by some over the shoulder armdrags. Oiwa cranks on the arm and an armbreaker sends Oleg to the rope. Back up and Oleg grabs a slam as we go to the draw at 3:02.

Rating: C. Even commentary was saying “this is meant to go to a draw” so it is kind of the definition of getting your feet wet. I’m fine with something like this as nothing more than a warmup as Oleg seems to have some name recognition based on his amateur credentials. It’s three minutes, it came and went, no one pretended it mattered. That’s an easy way to start the night.

Pre-Show: New Japan Ranbo

This is the Royal Rumble (minute long intervals, pin/submission/over the top eliminations), with the final four moving on to a match at New Year’s Dash to crown this year’s Provisional King Of Pro Wrestling Champion. Sho is in at #1 and Hikuleo is in at #2, leaving Sho looking nervous. The forearms have little effect on Hikuleo so Sho bails to the floor for some regrouping.

Evil (with Dick Togo) is in at #3, meaning Hikuleo gets to beat up two people instead of one. Tomohiro Ishii is in at #4 and stares down Hikuleo before helping Evil beat him down. Great-O-Khan is in at #5 and takes his sweet time getting to the ring as Ishii and Hikuleo fight. With Khan taking forever to get in, Douki is in at #6 and helps clear the ring without eliminating anyone.

Evil and Togo try to get rid of Ishii but Rocky Romero is in at #7 for the save. Romero gets rid of Evil and the Forever Lariats have Sho in trouble. Kenta is in at #8 and gets in a brawl with Ishii until Yoshinobu Kanemaru is in at #9. With more brawling ensuing, Aaron Henare (he’s big) is in at #10 and slugs it out with Ishii to limited avail. Ryusuke Taguchi is in at #11 and helps Henare get rid of Ishii.

Taguchi and Romero (former team) go after Henare but Jeff Cobb is in at #12 as Hikuleo gets rid of Douki and Kanemaru. Shane Haste is in at #13, with Romero countering his powerbomb attempt. Mikey Nicholls (Haste’s partner) is in at #14 and

Romero is out fast. Haste and Nicholls (The Mighty Don't Kneel) double team Taguchi for the pin as Yujiro Takahashi is in at #15.

Cobb whips Khan into Hikuleo, who gets clotheslined out as a result. Toru Yano (who has dominated a lot of this title's history) is in at #16 as Cobb is tossed as well. There goes Haste, followed by Nicholls, leaving Khan and Henare to stand tall. El Phantasma is in at #17 and starts raking backs (as the Dermis Destroyer). A nipple twist (yep) gets rid of Henare and it's Taichi in at #18.

Everyone but Taichi (including some eliminated names) fight on the floor and it's Shingo Takagi (last year's champion who reportedly doesn't want to be here) in to go after Taichi. I believe (as there are a lot of people outside) that leaves us with Sho, Khan, Taguchi, Takahashi, Yano, Phantasma, Taichi and Takagi as the final group (remember the final four advance).

A bunch of people get together to dump Taichi and there goes Takahashi. Phantasma is knocked off the apron but lands on the barricade, where Kenta (who was apparently eliminated somewhere in there) and Takahashi help him back to the apron. Takagi joins him out there and Sho accidentally knocks Phantasma out, meaning Khan, Takagi, Sho and Yano win to advance at 30:35.

Rating: C+. This is the Wrestle Kingdom "get everyone on the show" match and it still works. What amazes me every year is that this match always flies by and it did so again here, with thirty minutes feeling like it was less than half that. It's a fun match that gives the fans something to cheer about while also setting up something for the future. That's more than you get on most Kickoff Show style matches so well done.

A woman tells the fans to vote for something.

Pre-Show: Yuji Nagata/Satoshi Kojima/Togi Makabe vs. Tatsumi

Fujinami/Minoru Suzuki/Tiger Mask

This is the Antonio Inoki Memorial Six Man Tag and Tiger Hattori is special referee for a real bonus. Nagata and Fujinami start things off with an exchange of wristlocks. That goes nowhere so Nagata shoulders him down, only to get dropped as well. Suzuki comes in to slug it out with Nagata.

Tiger Mask gets in a few kicks and it's Nagata getting beaten down in the corner by a rotating cast. Nagata manages a suplex so Kojima can come in to chop Suzuki in the corner. This proves to be rather stupid as Suzuki glares at him and laughs at the idea of a forearm off. Tiger Mask comes in for the tiger driver and a near fall, only to get caught in the Kojicutter.

It's off to Makabe as everything breaks down, with Nagata and company getting caught in stereo holds. All of those are broken up until Tiger Mask crucifixed Makabe for two. Suzuki catches Makabe on top so Tiger Mask tries a...something that doesn't work, allowing Makabe to cradle him for the pin at 9:07.

Rating: C. Much like the other two matches, I don't think this one was entirely meant to be taken seriously. This was much more about getting some legends in there for the sake of honoring the most important person the company has ever seen. That is completely understandable so soon after Inoki's passing and the match was certainly watchable, if a bit formulaic.

Post match, Fujinami welcomes the fans to the show and honors Inoki.

We start with a tribute to Antonio Inoki, as you had to know was coming.

The opening video, if you can call it that, runs down the card, in order. As per tradition, I'm still not sure if I like

that or not.

IWGP Junior Heavyweight Tag Team Titles: Catch 2/2 vs. LiYoh

Catch 2/2 (TJP/Francesco Akira), of the United Empire, is defending against Lio Rush/Yoh (who are an unlikely team that managed to win the Super Junior Tag League to get this shot). It's a wild fight to start with Rush dropping TJP and taking Akira up the ramp, where Akira plants him face first on the steel ramp. Back in and Yoh fights them off for a bit, only to get caught in the wrong corner.

Akira hits a rope walk Tree of Woe dropkick to send Yoh outside, setting up Take A Picture (kind of a toss from the apron hip attack). The busted open Rush is picked up as TJP hits a Shinjiro Otani to Yoh but Rush cuts him off with a spear. Rush comes in off the tag and picks the pace way up, including the Tajiri handspring elbow to both champs. Suicide dives take out both of them again and it's back to Yoh, whose superkick is cut off. Everything breaks down and everyone but TJP is knocked down.

Back up and a powerbomb/suplex combination drops Yoh but Rush makes the save with the Final Hour. The 3K (3D into a Downward Spiral) connects on Akira, only to have TJP come in with the Mamba Splash for the save. The Detonation Kick gets two on Yoh but the Leaning Tower is countered with a poisonrana. Another 3K gets another two but TJP is right back with a small package to pin Yoh and retain at 10:31.

Rating: B-. That's a smart way to open the show as it was all energy and they didn't bother wasting time with anything fancy. 2/2 is a good team and they did their thing here. Rush's eye being busted open is what is going to be remembered here as it was a gusher, but other than that you had a ten minute match which I feel like I've seen several times before.

IWGP Women's Title: Kairi vs. Tam Nakano

Kairi (formerly Sane) is defending and this is Stardom's portion of the show. Kairi is in her pirate gear, complete with...Grim Reapers? They fight over a lockup to start until Nakano grabs a headlock. A basement dropkick puts Kairi down and Nakano gets to give her what might be described as a cute stare.

Back up and Kairi sends her into the corner for the sliding forearm but charges into a spinning kick to the face. With Kairi outside, Nakano hits a dive (left a bit low), followed by a Steiner Screwdriver for two back inside. That's quite the kickout move less than five minutes in but Kairi is back up with a spinning backfist for two of her own. The Insane Elbow retains the title at 5:57.

Rating: C+. They went through this as fast as they could as they didn't have much time here. Kairi is still rather good in the ring and I've heard good things about Nakano. The Screwdriver was weird and felt like something they were trying to squeeze in whether it fit there or not. For a fast match though and what I believe is the first women's match ever at Wrestle Kingdom, it went well.

Post match the lights go out and Mercedes Mone (Sasha Banks) debuts, shocking...I'm sure there is someone there who didn't know this was coming. Thankfully commentary acknowledges that it wasn't a surprise as they have the staredown with Kairi holding the title in the air.

Mone pulls her into what looked like a Gory Stretch spun into a faceplant (or it might have been some kind of an armbar that didn't go right). That leaves Mone to introduce herself as the CEO of the women's division. She's coming for the title in San Jose next month and you can bank on it. That was certainly a debut but it didn't quite blow the roof off.

IWGP Tag Team Titles: Bishamon vs. FTR

Bishamon (Hirooki Goto/Yoshi-Hashi of Chaos) are challenging

and commentary tells us about FTR's travel issues getting here. Hashi shoulders Wheeler down to start so we'll try Harwood vs. Goto instead. That doesn't last long as Hashi comes back in for the double team, only to have it broken up just as fast.

The champs send them outside for a dive, setting up the PowerPlex for two on Goto. A powerbomb into a bridging dragon suplex gets two with Hashi making the save. The Big Rig is broken up though and Goto hits the fireman's carry backbreaker for a breather. Harwood comes in off the blind tag and gets taken down with a running neckbreaker.

Bishamon's Sho Tow (I think?) finisher is broken up and it's a Big Rig for two on Goto. Wheeler and Hashi suplex each other to the floor, leaving Goto to fight out of a piledriver attempt. Another piledriver attempt works just fine, followed by the spike piledriver for two with Hashi making the save. Another Big Rig is broken up and it's Sho Tow to Harwood for the pin and the titles at 10:05.

Rating: B-. And thus FTR's downfall continues as they are now out of titles after holding a bunch of them for several months. The good thing is that they lost them in another solid match, which shouldn't be a surprise in the slightest. Bishamon winning the titles is fine as commentary hyped them up as the best team in Japan. Give them the titles so FTR, who seem to be more guest stars than anything else, can head back to AEW and sit around some more.

TV Title: Zack Sabre Jr. vs. Ren Narita

Tournament final for the inaugural title with a fifteen minute time limit, meaning a draw will require a rematch at a later date. They both fight for a cross armbreaker attempt to start before Sabre's penalty kick misses, giving us a standoff. Narita kicks him down but Sabre is right back up with a twist of the arm.

A belly to belly gets Narita out of trouble for a few seconds but he can't hook an abdominal stretch. They trade kicks to the back, with Narita sitting down so Sabre can hit his own. An exchange of kicks to the chest goes to Sabre but Narita goes after Sabre's arm for a change and a double knockdown.

Back up and a bridging t-bone suplex gives Narita two but Sabre pulls him down by the leg. Sabre can't get a triangle choke so Narita hits him in the face. They trade snap German suplexes but Narita misses a running spinwheel kick. Back to back German suplexes are no sold so they fight over another abdominal stretch, only to have Sabre switch to an armbar for the tap at 10:30.

Rating: C+. I wasn't feeling this one very much as it was a lot of both guys doing the same thing and often popping up right after. Sabre is good at tormenting people with his holds but that wasn't really on display here. Narita is someone who has come a long way in a short amount of time, but it wasn't exactly an awesome showcase.

Post match the Mighty Don't Kneel come out to offer Sabre a spot on the team and the shirt goes on.

Never Openweight Title: Karl Anderson vs. Tama Tonga

Tonga, with Jado, is challenging and gets decked before the bell. Anderson drops him on the barricade and throws him over before going back inside to pose a bit. The Burner (Rikishi) Driver on the ramp knocks Tonga silly again, leaving Anderson to chant his own name. Tonga blocks a Gun Stun on the ramp though and they fight to the apron for a slugout.

They slug it out on the apron with Tonga getting the better of things before hammering away in the corner. A charge misses though and Anderson hits the HI YAH kick. They head up top with Tonga knocking him down, setting up a top rope clothesline. Supreme Flow gives Tonga two and they run the ropes, only to have Anderson's Gun Stun blocked. A middle rope

Gun Stun to Anderson sets up a regular one (with Tonga slipping off, making it look like Anderson shoved him off) to give Tonga the pin and the title at 9:33.

Rating: C. This felt like a match that had a lot more history behind it and if that is the case, fair enough. Tonga winning makes sense as Anderson is in WWE full time so put the title on someone who is going to be around. Good enough match here, but that ending didn't exactly do it any favors.

Keiji Muto/Hiroshi Tanahashi/Shota Umino vs. Los Ingobernables de Japon

This is Muto's (Great Muta, but in normal form) final New Japan match. Muto and Sanada start things off with a teased Too Sweet but Sanada takes out the bad knee. A springboard dropkick takes Muto down again, only to have Muto grab a backsplash. The moonsault is loaded up but Tanahashi calls Muto off for the sake of his knees.

Instead Muto snapmares him down and hits the Power Drive elbow. Tanahashi comes in for the springboard spinning crossbody but Naito takes him down. A basement dropkick rocks Tanahashi again and we slow things down. Bushi's neckbreaker gets two but Tanahashi gets in a dragon screw legwhip on Naito. That's enough for the tag off to Umino to pick the pace way up and clean house.

Everything breaks down and Los Ingobernables get caught in triple submissions but a rope break leads to the triple escape. Bushi missile dropkicks Umino and Bushiroonis (just go with it) up. Tanahashi comes back in with some Twists and Shouts, setting up Muto's Shining Wizard on Bushi. Umino adds the Death Rider for the pin at 9:21.

Rating: C+. This was rather formula until the end when everything broke down and the good guys dominated, as they should. There was a grand total of no way that Muto's team was going to lose in his last match in the promotion so the result

was little more than waiting for the obvious ending than anything else. Giving Umino the pin was a nice moment and it isn't like there is any shame in losing to Muto in his last match around here.

IWGP Junior Heavyweight Title: Hiromu Takahashi vs. Master Wato vs. El Desperado vs. Taiji Ishimori

Ishimori is defending and this is one fall to a finish. They start fast (I sense a theme beginning here) with Takahashi and Desperado running Wato over. An exchange of rollups give us a big standoff as we hear about a fight backstage, possibly involving Tetsuya Naito. Ishimori bails to the ramp for a breather and that's not cool with everyone else, meaning the chase is on. That's fine with Ishimori, as the fight breaks out on the ramp and Ishimori is the only one to get back inside unscathed.

Back in and Desperado goes after Ishimori's knee but the other two make a save. Wato strikes away at Takahashi and sends him outside, meaning it's time for the string of dives. Takahashi caps it off with a huge dive off the top to put everyone down before they all head back inside. A series of strikes leads to Desperado hitting something like a Blue Thunder Bomb on Ishimori.

Desperado punches Wato down and everyone is on the mat as we hear about Los Ingobernables getting in a backstage fight with the Kongoh stable of Pro Wrestling Noah (right before the New Japan vs. Noah show as luck would have it). The four way chop off is on until Takahashi and Desperado are sent outside. Wato kicks Ishimori down and goes up top, only to get pulled down in a Tower of Doom as Takahashi comes back in.

Desperado joins everyone else and goes after Takahashi, setting up an Angel's Wings for two. Takahashi grabs the Time Bomb for two of his own but Wato is back in with a tiger suplex into a crucifix for two more as Ishimori pulls the ref.

Back up and a SCARY German suplex gives Wato two on Takahashi, who is right back up with the Time Bomb II for the pin at 16:39.

Rating: B. They were flying through most of this and it didn't feel nearly as long as it was, but there were quite a few times where they stopped, which stood out a bit. That being said, I'd call it more than acceptable when they were going that fast. All that being said, this is the fourth time Takahashi has won the belt at Wrestle Kingdom, to the point where I was actually thinking "Really? Again?" when he won here. Very good match, but maybe let someone else get this spot next time.

IWGP United States Title: Kenny Omega vs. Will Ospreay

Ospreay, with the United Empire, is defending and this is a pretty long time in the making. Don Callis joins commentary (great) as Ospreay headlocks him to the mat. Ospreay tries to pick up the pace but gets knocked off the apron, sending him hard into the barricade. Back in and Omega kicks him down and rips off a turnbuckle pad. Omega hits a hard backbreaker to cut Ospreay off again, only to have him come back with a hot shot.

A big boot and cutter drop Omega and a Phenomenal Forearm does it again. Ospreay kicks him to the apron for a strike off, only to miss the middle rope Oscutter. Omega puts a table on top of Ospreay on the floor and strikes away even more. That's fine with Ospreay, who knocks him away and goes up top for a Sky Twister to drop Omega again. Back in and the Hidden Blade gives Ospreay two but he still can't hit the Oscutter.

Omega is fine enough to grab the Snapdragon for two and they're both a bit winded. Back up and Omega takes him up top but Ospreay flips out of the top rope dragon superplex. The Oscutter finally connects for two and there are some HARD Cheeky Nandos kicks to keep Omega in trouble. Ospreay goes up

again but this time Omega DDTs him onto the exposed buckle, drawing a good deal of blood. There is blood all over the floor as Omega hits the Rise of the Terminator.

Ospreay is sent head first through the table (leaving a big hole in the middle) before the beating continues back inside. There's the Snapdragon into a V Trigger, with Callis complaining about a slow near fall. Omega goes up top but Ospreay stumbles into the ropes to crotch him down. Ospreay goes up as well but gets dropped face first into the buckle again (ouch).

Another V Trigger looks to set up a super One Winged Angel. Since that would, you know, kill Ospreay, it's a super German suplex instead. Another V Trigger seems to wake Ospreay up as he strikes away, including a big shot to drop Omega. The Hidden Blade gets two on Omega, followed by a Styles Clash for the same. Another Hidden Blade misses and they strike each other down while holding wrists. More strikes set up a V Trigger and the One Winged Angel to give Omega the pin and the title at 34:38.

Rating: A-. This was a different match than I was expecting as they didn't go as nuts with the flying and instead focused on the hard hitting fight. Omega is a lot easier to watch around here, as he goes a lot more serious and actually feels like he is having a match instead of a performance, making it that much better. Ospreay got in some of his high flying to go with the strikes, but that blood is what is going to be remembered. Heck of a match here and it felt worthy of Wrestle Kingdom.

We recap Kazuchika Okada challenging Jay White for the IWGP World Title. White took the title from him last year and now Okada wants it back. Game on.

IWGP World Heavyweight Title: Jay White vs. Kazuchika Okada

White, with Gedo, is defending and Rocky Romero is on commentary. They glare at each other to start until Okada

shrugs off a chop. Okada takes him down but Gedo pulls White away from a running something. White gets in a shot of his own though and we hit the chinlock. A DDT gives White two and he drives Okada into the barricade for two, which he shouts over and over again.

After some chops, he adds a SWEET, only to have Okada come back with a DDT of his own. Okada grabs a flapjack and dropkicks White off the top to send him outside. Back in and a missile dropkick sets up the Money Clip, which is broken up just as fast. White is back with a swinging suplex, leaving commentary thinking White wants the fans to cheer him. The chinlock goes on before White goes after the knee for a change.

The knee is fine enough for Okada to hit his dropkick though, followed by the spinning Tombstone. White is sent outside for a top rope flip dive but he's smart/beaten up enough to drop to the ground before the Rainmaker. Okada tries it again but this time White spits in his face, setting up a swinging Rock Bottom to put Okada down for a change. Back up and Okada grabs the arm for back to back clotheslines, only to have the Rainmaker countered into the Blade Runner.

Another Blade Runner is blocked so White hits his own standing clotheslines. Now it's White doing the Rainmaker pose, allowing Okada to hit the real thing for a close two. White wins a strike out and says Okada isn't taking this from him. They slug it out until Okada hits his own Blade Runner, followed by a Cobra Flosion. The Rainmaker gives Okada the title back at 33:04.

Rating: A-. Another very good match as White continues to feel like a star. Then you have Okada who is...well he's Okada, and that is about all you need to say about him. This didn't quite hit the top level that some Wrestle Kingdom main events have reached in the past, but I'll take a near classic to close out the show any day. Much like Takahashi winning again though,

seeing Okada win the World Title again isn't the most exciting result. Great match though and that's all that matters.

Post match White pulls himself up and actually seems to show some respect. With White gone, Shingo Takagi comes out to issue the challenge for February 1 (commentary seems a bit confused by Takagi picking that date). With Takagi gone, Okada asks if Antonio Inoki saw the matches and thanks the fans to wrap things up. Actually hang on, as we'll get in one more Inoki chant to really finish it off.

Commentary talks a lot, as tends to be the case.

Overall Rating: A. It's not quite at the same level as previous Wrestle Kingdoms but how can you complain about something this good? The last two matches were both great and there was more than enough that was either solid to near awesome throughout. Nothing was bad, but perhaps more importantly, this FELT like a Wrestle Kingdom. Maybe it's the fans cheering or maybe it's having the show on one night again, but this was another blast, as tends to be the case with Wrestle Kingdom.

Results

Boltin Oleg vs. Ryohei Oiwa went to a time limit draw
Great-O-Khan, Shingo Takagi, Sho and Toru Yano won the New Japan Ranbo
Togi Makabe/Yuji Nagata/Satoshi Kojima b. Tatsumi Fujinami/Minoru Suzuki/Tiger Mask – rollup to Tiger Mask
2/2 b. LiYoh – Small package to Yoh
Kairi b. Tam Nakano – Insane Elbow
Bishamon b. FTR – Sho Tow to Harwood
Zack Sabre Jr. b. Ren Narita – Armbar
Tama Tonga b. Karl Anderson – Gun Stun
Keiji Muto/Shota Umino/Hiroshi Tanahashi b. Los Ingobernables de Japon – Death Rider to Bushi
Hiroshi Takahashi b. Master Wato, El Desperado and Taiji Ishimori – Time Bomb II to Wato

Kenny Omega b. Will Ospreay – One Winged Angel
Kazuchika Okada b. Jay White – Rainmaker

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