

Wrestle Kingdom XVI Night Three (New Japan vs. Pro Wrestling Noah)

Wrestle Kingdom XVI Night Three

Date: January 8, 2022

Location: Yokohama Arena, Yokohama, Japan

Attendance: 7,077

Commentators: Chris Charlton, Kevin Kelly

We finally come to the last night of this event and this show is going to be the most unique of them all. Instead of a traditional show, this is Pro Wrestling Noah vs. New Japan Pro Wrestling in a battle for supremacy. Noah showed up yesterday to say they were better and little else has been brought up about the show, so I have no idea what to expect. Let's get to it.

Note that I do not follow Noah, so I will have no idea who their wrestlers are or anything about storylines. Please bear with me.

Opening sequence.

Kosei Fujita (New Japan) vs. Yasutaka Yano (Noah)

This is the equivalent of a battle of the Young Lions. They go to the mat to start as commentary talks about their amateur success, with Fujita having a good bit more success. Fujita works on the arm but gets reversed into an armbar. The hammerlock keeps Fujita in trouble but he fights up and drives Yano into the ropes. A running elbow to the face drops Fujita and it's a keylock to send him bailing to the rope again.

Yano gets two off a high crossbody as we hear about this show benefiting the Japanese Red Cross. Back up and Fujita hits a

dropkick but can't get a Boston crab as we have three minutes left. Another attempt lets the hold go on with two minutes to go. The long crawl to the ropes gets Yano out of trouble and they slug it out until Fujita hits a dropkick. The Boston crab goes on again but Yano hangs on for the time limit draw at 10:02 (close enough).

Rating: C. Totally fine match here, assuming you don't mind knowing that they were hitting the time limit about four minutes in. There is nothing wrong with throwing two young guys out there and letting them do their thing for a bit, which is what we got here. It was there to get the crowd started and the drama at the end did so well enough.

New Japan – 0

Noah – 0

Draw – 1

Post match Yano slaps him in the face and referees have to hold them apart.

Tencozy/Yuji Nagata (New Japan) vs. Funky Express (Noah)

That would be Hiroyoshi Tenzan/Satoshi Kojima (Tencozy) and King Tany/Muhammad Yone/Akitoshi Saito (Funky Express). Thankfully the Express has their names on their tights and it's Nagata vs. Saito to kick away at each other to start. That doesn't go anywhere (though they do yell a lot) and it's off to Yone (with his great afro), who shoulders Kojima down.

Tenzan comes in to shoulder Tany down before Tencozy clears the ring without much trouble. Tany fights back though and slams Kojima onto Tenzan to take over. It's Tenzan getting caught in the wrong corner so the beating can be on. That lasts all of three seconds as Tenzan comes back with a suplex, only to have Yano hit a rather impressive delayed version. The Express ties Tenzan in the ropes for some rather rude posing but he is right back with a Mountain Bomb to Yone.

Nagata comes in to clean house as commentary goes over the history of New Japan vs. Noah (cool). A slugout goes to Nagata but a dropkick gives Yone a breather. Tany comes back in but walks into a suplex, allowing Kojima to come back in for the rapid fire corner chops. Everything breaks down and the Express gets to triple team Kojima. There's a top rope splash for two with a save having to be made. Back up and the Koji Cutter drops Tany. The Tenkoji Cutter gets two with Yone making a save of his own. Tany chokeslams Kojima for two but he is right back up the lariat to finish Tany at 12:18.

Rating: C+. This was the kind of six man tag that you often see around here and it was a fine idea. They presented the two preshow matches as the future and past of the promotions facing off and that was the feeling I got here. It wasn't some classic or anything, but you had experienced wrestlers having a good match against each other. Perfectly fine for a second warmup match.

New Japan – 1

Noah – 0

Draw – 1

The opening video features a bunch of wrestlers talking about what the show means to them. This seems to be a big battle for honor, which is quite the important deal in its own right.

Chaos/Six Or Nine (New Japan) vs. Daisuke Harada/Hajime Ohara/Daiki Inaba/Yoshiki Inamura/Kinya Okada (Noah)

That would be Tomohiro Ishii/Hirooki Goto/Yoshi-Hashi for Chaos and Master Wato/Ryusuke Taguchi for Six Or Nine. For some reason the video jumps ahead and we're joined in progress with no commentary and Taguchi hitting a dropkick, allowing Ishii to come in for a shoulder off with Inamura.

Commentary comes back (seemingly realizing they were off the air) and says this is the power battle they wanted to see. The slugout goes to Ishii but Inamura clotheslines him down. Ishii

manages a suplex but Inamura does the same thing right back. Hashi comes in but gets slammed down as well, allowing Okada to run him over. A series of running strikes in the corner gets two on Hashi, with Goto making the save.

Goto gets to clean house as everything breaks down. The big series of dives leaves a bunch of people down on the floor and it's Inamura running over Ishii and Wato back inside. Hashi gets suplexed for two and Okada kicks him in the chest for the same. Hashi's superkick gets two more and the Boston crab makes Okada tap at 6:40 shown (of about 11:40 apparently so we missed a good bit).

Rating: C+. You pretty much know what you're going to get with one of these matches and it was holding true to form here. The action was good, though I do wonder how much better it would have been with the other five or so minutes. I'm not sure who the Noah guys exactly are, but the Inamura vs. Ishii stuff was some nice hoss fighting.

New Japan – 2

Noah – 0

Draw – 1

Post match, Ishii and Inamura have to be held apart.

Commentary explains that power went out in the arena at the start of the match.

Atsushi Kotoge (Noah) vs. Sho (New Japan)

Kevin Kelly: "This should be a clash of styles." Sho bails to the floor at the bell so Kotoge follows him out to start the beating. Commentary explains that New Japan fans don't like Sho and wouldn't mind seeing Kotoge beat him up. Sho knocks him outside and sweeps the leg on the apron, setting up a running dropkick to send Kotoge to the floor. Some choking with a leather wrap has Kotoge in more trouble and we hit the chinlock back inside.

Kotoge fights up and forearms away before sending Sho outside for a change. There's the big dive and it's time for Sho to be worried for a bit. The running corner clotheslines and a bulldog give Kotoge two so Sho hides behind a referee. That's enough to set up a spear to Kotoge, who pops up for a Side Effect. Kotoge goes up so Sho shoves the referee into the corner for a crotching (which is totally legal somehow). Since nothing else is working, Sho follows an old Bobby Heenan suggestion of "grab a wrench" and knocks Kotoge silly for the pin at 8:23.

Rating: C+. This was your cruiserweight style match, though I did kind of love the ending of "hit him in the head with a wrench". There is something to be said about going that simple and it was certainly effective. Kotoge seems to be popular (he was wearing a hat) and this did seem to be a natural enough matchup.

New Japan – 3

Noah – 0

Draw – 1

Commentary isn't happy that Sho won.

Stinger (Noah) vs. Bullet Club (New Japan)

That would be Hayata/Seiki Yoshioka vs. Taiji Ishimori/Gedo. Yoshioka and Ishimori start things off, with Gedo offering an early distraction so double teaming can ensue. The Club is sent into each other though and Yoshioka hits a running boot on Ishimori. Back up and Yoshioka hits a springboard crossbody to send Yoshioka outside. That means a whipping from Gedo's belt, followed by some back rakes to keep up the screaming.

We hit the chinlock, with Kelly mentioning someone having to put money in the swear jar. Kelly: "And the proceeds can go to the Japanese Red Cross!" It's back to Ishimori for a kick and a sliding German suplex in the ropes. Yoshioka finally gets over for the hot tag to Hayata for a running kick to the face.

Gedo takes Hayata down but the Gedo Clutch doesn't work. Everything breaks down with Yoshioka cleaning house, including a big springboard moonsault to take out Ishimori on the floor. That leaves Hayata to hit a hurricanrana driver (the Headache) to finish Gedo at 9:00.

Rating: C+. Quite a long heat segment on Yoshioka here until the impressive looking Hayata came in. Commentary was hyping up Hayata's dominance of Noah's Junior Heavyweight division so it seemed like quite the treat to have him around. Another completely watchable match with some high points, but it didn't reach any special level.

New Japan – 3

Noah – 1

Draw – 1

Suzuki-Gun (New Japan) vs. Los Perros del Mal de Japon (Noah)

That would be El Desperado/Douki vs. Yo-Hey/Nosawa Rongai. Los Perros jump them to start and throw Desperado's Junior Heavyweight Title out to the floor, as they seem to be a bit rude. That's broken up and Suzuki takes over in the corners. Desperado and Nosawa officially start us off but it's quickly off to Douki. That means a cheap shot from Hey and Los Perros take over again.

Douki misses an enziguri and the rather annoying Hey yells at him a lot. A quick run to the corner allows Desperado to come in and pick up the pace, including a slugout with Hey. They run the ropes until Hey hits a dropkick to put Desperado down. Everything breaks down and it's time for a series of dives out to the floor. Back in and Nosawa cranks on Desperado's neck until Douki makes the save. That's enough for Desperado to hit a lifting sitout Pedigree (Tommaso Ciampa's Fairy Tale Ending) for the pin at 9:12.

Rating: C. Los Perros feel like they belong on the independent circuit around 2001 and that wasn't exactly great. Desperado

feels like a star though and his title reign seems to be backing that up. It isn't a surprise that he got the pin, which felt a bit like the way the previous match went with Hayata.

New Japan – 4

Noah – 1

Draw – 1

Sugiura-Gun (Noah) vs. Suzuki-Gun (New Japan)

Takashi Sugiura/Kazushi Sakuraba/Toru Yano (the latter of whom is from New Japan and replacing the injured Kenta) for Noah and Taichi/Minoru Suzuki/Taka Michinoku for New Japan. Suzuki is already wanting to massacre Yano as well after Night Two so there is a bit of a story here.

It's a brawl on the floor to start until it's Sakuraba putting Taichi in a kneebar. A rope is grabbed so Taichi pulls on Sakuraba's ears, sending him over to Yano. The turnbuckle pad is pulled off, which makes Yano feel smart. The brawl is on outside, leaving Taka to work on Yano in the corner. Suzuki comes in and tortures Yano (as you might have expected) before getting to brawl with Sugiura (I didn't know you had Gun fights in wrestling).

Sugiura hits a running knee in the corner and fires off forearms to keep Suzuki in trouble. Back up and Suzuki is rather happy to be in a slugout before kicking Sugiura in the face. Everything breaks down and Taka rolls Sugiura up for two. Sugiura has had it with Taka and hits a clothesline into an Olympic Slam for the pin at 9:40.

Rating: B-. It's the best match of the night so far, though some of that is due to Suzuki being a scary human being. They had a hard hitting match here and it felt like two regular groups instead of three people tossed together. It's nice to see the card picking up too, as it has only been so good so far.

New Japan – 4

Noah – 2

Draw – 1

Intermission.

House Of Torture (New Japan) vs. Go Shiozaki/Masa Kitamiya (Noah)

Evil and Dick Togo for the House here. The House jumps them to start but Shiozaki (maybe Noah's biggest star) fights back with a double clothesline. Everything breaks down (assuming it was in one piece to begin with) and a turnbuckle pad is ripped off. That means Shiozaki can be sent back first into an exposed buckle so Togo can get two. Evil grabs the abdominal stretch with an assist from Togo as commentary talks about how Shiozaki follows in the footsteps of the company's Four Pillars.

Shiozaki gets in a shot to the face and brings in Masa to clean house. A shot to the ribs cuts Masa off though and it's Togo coming in again. Masa runs him over as well though and it's back to Shiozaki for the rapid fire chops in the corner. Evil distracts the referee though and it's a low blow to take Masa down. The referee gets crushed in the corner so here is Yujiro Takahashi to help with the group beatdown on Shiozaki. Masa breaks that up and puts Evil in a leglock, leaving Shiozaki to hit a HARD lariat on Togo for the pin at 9:50.

Rating: C. I'm not a big fan of the House of Torture but you can tell that Shiozaki is one of the bigger stars on this whole show and he felt like it. If nothing else, the impact from that lariat made this feel like a hard hitting match and that was an improvement. If nothing else, at least the score is evening up a bit and that helps the show as a whole.

New Japan – 4

Noah – 3

Draw – 1

Charlton: "Wouldn't mind seeing that run back again if it meant Dick Togo being sent to the hospital again."

Naomichi Marufuji/Yoshinari Ogawa (Noah) vs. Suzuki-Gun (New Japan)

Zack Sabre Jr./Yoshinobu Kanemaru for Gun here. Sabre and Ogawa trade cross arm chokes to start as we hear about Sabre's time in Noah before heading over to New Japan. Some cravates don't work well for Sabre as Ogawa sends him down to make Sabre think twice. Marufuji and Kanemaru come in, with the latter bailing to the floor in a hurry. Gun gets Marufuji on the floor as well to start smashing his knee onto the ground. Simple, yet effective.

Back in and Sabre starts cranking on the leg in one of those freaky moves that only he can do. Kanemaru stomps on the leg and hits a shinbreaker as Gun starts taking turns on Marufuji. That doesn't last long though as Marufuji fights up and brings in Ogawa for the house cleaning. Sabre doesn't seem to mind as he takes him down by the knee to crank away again. Kanemaru comes back in but gets beaten down, only to come back with what looks like a low blow.

It's back to Marufuji for a running clothesline and we get a double knockdown. Kanemaru gets a Figure Four on the bad leg for a bit, followed by a moonsault for two. For some reason Kanemaru loads up some liquid in his mouth, only to have a kick to the face knock it back out for a good visual. Marufuji knees Kanemaru down for two and a knee to the back of the head is good for the same. Sliced Bread #2 is enough to finish Kanemaru at 15:19.

Rating: B. This started getting better and was the best match on the show so far. What matters here is that things started getting more interesting near the end, with Marufuji feeling like a star and Sabre being there to torment various limbs. Good, solid tag match here, which is where New Japan tends to

shine in a lot of ways.

New Japan – 4

Noah – 4

Draw – 1

Post match Sabre mocks Ogawa a bit before leaving.

Los Ingobernables de Japon (New Japan) vs. Kongoh (Noah)

Los Ingobernables: Tetsuya Naito/Shingo Takagi/Sanada/Bushi/Hiromu Takahashi
Kongoh: Katsuhiko Nakajima/Kenoh/Manabu Soya/Tadasuke/Aleja

These are the two anti-hero factions. Kongoh comes out together while Los Ingobernables make individual entrances. Kenoh seems to be the leader and similar to Naito, in that he feels the company abandoned him. Nakajima and Naito get things going with Naito not being willing to lock up. That's too far for Kongoh, who rushes into the ring and turns it into a big fight on the floor.

Back in and Naito and Nakajima trade some quickly broken grabs, leaving both of them in a Tranquilo pose. Since that leaves you a bit vulnerable, Kongoh jumps Naito again and the Los Ingobernables are in trouble again. The rest of the team comes in for some glaring and Naito is able to get outside for a breather. Back in and it's Takahashi vs. Aleja (the masked guy, which might help me remember some names) for the pace can pick WAY up.

Aleja sends him outside, where Tanahashi sends another member of Kongoh into the barricade. Tanahashi gets back in, where a springboard missile dropkick takes him down. Aleja gets pulled into the wrong corner though and it's Takagi dropping some elbows. Kenoh gets knocked off the apron so he comes in to slug it out with Takagi, who takes him down with a dragon screw legwhip. Bushi gets the tag and kicks Aleja in the head but the rest of Kongoh interferes again, meaning Bushi is very

high numbered teamed down.

Soya, the power guy, is in to grab a swinging sleeper for two on Bushi before it's quickly off to Kenoh. Naito almost gets suckered in, meaning the choking can continue in the corner. Nakajima kicks Bushi in the back and sneers at the Ingobernables corner, setting up Aleja's basement dropkick for two. Bushi manages a double hurricanrana to get out of trouble, meaning Sanada gets to clean house. House is cleaned in a hurry, including a big slingshot forearm to the floor.

Back in and Soya can't hit a German suplex on Sanada but he can run him over with a shot to the face. Some chops have Sanada in more trouble and Soya muscles him up with a suplex. A double tag brings in Nakajima to slug it out with Naito, with Nakajima getting two off a Shining Wizard. Everything breaks down again, leaving Naito and Tanahashi to grab stereo submission holds on Kenoh and Aleja.

Ropes are reached so Naito stays on Kenoh's neck to set up Destino. An exchange of kicks to the head leave both of them laying but it's Nakajima up to kick away at Los Ingobernables. Bushi and Naito manages to kick him down, setting up a sunset flip into a basement dropkick. Takagi and Nakajima strike it out until Nakajima is sent into the corner for running strikes from Los Ingobernables. Kongoh breaks that up and Nakajima Saito suplexes Takagi.

Kongoh gets to take Takagi down for a change but he strikes away at Tadasuke and hits a DDT. Kenoh breaks up Last of the Dragon and it's time for another parade of strikes to the face. Aleja hits a double dropkick, setting up a bit flip dive to take out Tanahashi on the floor. Bushi dives onto Soya, leaving Takagi to pound on Tadasuke back inside. A running lariat gives Tadasuke two but Takagi is back with Last of the Dragon for the pin at 26:34.

Rating: A-. This is what they were shooting for as it felt

like a battle between two groups on equal footing. Los Ingobernables are awesome and Kongoh stood out to me more than probably anything from Noah on the show so far. The teams came off like they were in a struggle to defeat the other and commentary was selling some of their personal issues. Pretty awesome match here, though it was another kind of abrupt/flat ending, which has been a theme tonight.

New Japan – 5

Noah – 4

Draw – 1

Post match Kenoh and Naito get into it again, with Los Ingobernables cleaning the ring.

Hiroshi Tanahashi/Kazuchika Okada (New Japan) vs. Keiji Mutoh/Kaito Kiyomiya (Noah)

This seems a bit unfair. Kaito grabs Okada's wrist to start and they go to the mat, firmly in first gear. A hammerlock makes it worse for Okada but he reverses with an armdrag. Back up and Kaito hits a crossbody but Okada brings in Tanahashi to take over. The grinding headlock has Kaito in a bit of trouble but he takes Tanahashi down with a top wristlock. A legdrop to the arm gets Tanahashi out of trouble and we even get some air guitar.

It's a bit too much air guitar though as Kaito grabs the arm and brings in Mutoh for a dream match. You can tell this means something as Mutoh takes him down by the arm as well. Mutoh switches it to the leg so Tanahashi goes to the rope, allowing the tag back to Okada. That means Mutoh can be taken up against the ropes for a slightly disrespectful tap on the chest, earning Okada a half crab.

That's turned into an STF, sending Okada straight to the rope. Kaito comes back in for the running legdrop but charges into a flapjack. It's back to Tanahashi to work on Kaito's leg, including the Texas Cloverleaf. With that broken up, Kaito is

sent outside in a crash, earning himself a much needed breather. Back in and things get a bit more serious, with Kaito and Okada striking away. Tanahashi gets his turn again for the middle rope Swanton but Kaito scores with a running clothesline.

Mutoh comes in again to work on Tanahashi's leg, including a dragon screw legwhip into a Figure Four. The rope is grabbed so Tanahashi goes after Mutoh's leg to even things up a bit. The lukewarm tag brings in Okada for the top rope elbow into the Rainmaker pose. Mutoh breaks that up with a Shining Wizard so it's back to a fired up Kaito to strike away. A missile dropkick gives Kaito two, followed by a running knee for the same.

Everything breaks down and it's time for an exchange of running strikes to the face for a four way knockdown. That's good for quite a solid show of applause until Kaito and Okada slug it out again. Okada gets the better of things and hits a spinning Tombstone but Mutoh is back in with a German suplex. Tanahashi has to break up a tiger suplex, allowing Okada to dropkick Kaito. The Landslide sets up the Rainmaker to give Okada the pin at 24:34.

Rating: B. Good main event, but I never bought into the idea that a dream team like Okada and Tanahashi were in danger. I know Mutoh is a huge legend, but ultimately he is pushing 60 and his best days were over more than ten years ago. How much of a threat is he really going to be in this situation? It felt special though, and that is what this kind of a match is supposed to be.

New Japan – 6

Noah – 4

Draw – 1

Post match respect is shown and we get the big thank you speech from Okada and Tanahashi.

We get about twelve minutes of interviews from the big names in the back.

Commentary recaps the night and tells us to keep watching to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. If you bought the big ultimate Blu-Ray edition of Wrestle Kingdom, this would have been a special bonus feature. Other than the last two matches, nothing felt like anything more than a match that happened to be taking place. New Japan led most of the night and then won in the end, making this a good enough show, but absolutely nothing you would need to watch. Stick with the first two nights of Wrestle Kingdom, but check out that ten man tag.

Overall Overall Rating: B+ What mattered the most was that this felt like a major show and then it delivered. Sometimes you need to blow the doors off and have a great show and that is what they did here. There was very little that didn't work over the three shows and I had a great time with the whole thing. New Japan has kind of fallen off the map since the pandemic started (again, not their fault) and it was nice to have that old feeling back again, even if it is just for two days.

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Pro Wrestling Noah 20th Anniversary: Chronicle Volume 4: Struggle

Pro Wrestling NOAH 20th Anniversary: Chronicle Volume 4

Date: November 22, 2020

Location: Yokohama Arena, Yokohama, Japan

I'm going to make this very clear: this is likely to be a disaster. A commenter on a site I contribute to thought I would like to try some Japanese wrestling outside of New Japan so here I am with a 4+ hour show with only Japanese commentary and a bunch of wrestlers I don't know. This is going to be completely based on the action and whatever I can pick up out of any videos they might have. Hold on because let's get to it.

If it wasn't clear, I'm coming into this completely blind and have no idea of any stories, characters or really any names save for a look at the card.

Commentary welcomes us to a mostly empty arena. I'm not sure if this is a pre-show or if there are no fans allowed but it appears to be a rather small (though good looking) arena. There are a few fans sprinkled throughout the building so I'm assuming some very limited attendance limits.

Commentary talks for a bit until one of them holds up a chart. I'm not sure what it means but it is divided into a bunch of sections with pictures of wrestlers inside. There are graphics included so I'm thinking this is a chart of stables maybe? Some of the sections have titles and the commentator moves them around, which I guess are his predictions? I'm probably

wrong on all of this but this doesn't seem to be the most serious part of the show.

We look at some clips of someone being beaten down by two people, costing him a match in the process. If the chart idea is right, this might have been someone being kicked out of a stable.

Commentary talks about the Junior Heavyweight Tag Team Title match and messes with the charts a bit more.

The chart is put away...and the commentator pulls out another one with a completely different set of wrestlers, belts and sections.

Here's a tweet of a wrestler with what looks to be the female commentator.

We see a clip from two weeks ago with a champion (or at least someone holding a belt) shouting at someone down on the floor. Commentary finds this funny and that might be the main event tonight.

The female commentator holds up a sign with an M on one side and hearts on another. The M seems to be a faction logo.

Masahiro Chono says I AM CHONO.

Now it's on to the Tag Team Title match.

I think we move onto the World Title match, which is apparently chronicled (Maybe?) in something called AXIZ Photobook.

We look at what seems to be English commentary. I bet they couldn't work a chart like the Japanese team.

The bell rings and the lights go out, sending us to the real opening video. The main focus is GHC Heavyweight (World) Champion Go Shiozaki and Katsuhiko Nakajima, as it should be.

Other matches get some attention as well.

We run down the card, I believe in the order it will air ala New Japan.

Hajime Ohara/Seiki Yoshioka/Yo-Hey/Mohammed Yone vs. Junta Miyawaki/Kinya Okada/Yasutaka Yano/Yoshiki Inamura

Oh yeah because I'll be able to figure out eight different people. Ohara/Yoshioka/Yo-Hey are part of the Full Throttle faction. I believe it's Ohara vs. Yano starting things off with a headlock takeover not doing much on Yano, who is right back up with a bunch of forearms. Okada comes in for a shoulder and a kick to the chest, meaning it's Yo-Hey coming in to take Ohara's place.

Miyawaki comes in to forearm away and runs the ropes into a wristdrag. A dropkick puts Yo-Hey down but he's right back up with one of his own, drawing in all of his partners for the quadruple teaming. Yone comes in to knock Miyawaki silly with a forearm and drops a leg for a bonus. We hit the neck crank, with Yane spinning him around the ring for a change of pace. The Figure Four necklock sends Miyawaki over to the ropes for the break but he's back up to slug away.

That earns him another forearm for a big knockdown but Miyawaki is back with a running elbow. The hot tag brings in Inamura (the big man on the team) to clean house, including knocking Full Throttle off the apron. Some splashes in the corner and another on the mat get two on Yane but he's back with a kick to the face. It's off to Yoshioka to kick away until he gets caught in a belly to back suplex. Okada comes back in for a dropkick and backbreaker, plus some shouting.

Yoshioka kicks him in the chest and then the back of the head, allowing Ohara to come back in. The STO plants him in a hurry and it's back to Yano as everything breaks down. Everyone gets together to shoulder and suplex Okada with Yoshioka having to make a save. A double dropkick puts Inamura on the floor and

Yo-Hey hits a big flip dive to send him into the barricade. Back in and Ohara puts on a kind of half crab Liontamer (pulling from underneath instead of from above) to make Yano tap at 10:39.

Rating: C+. This was fun and a nice way to open things up (thankfully with graphics, including the Twitter handles, when people came in to make things a lot easier) as starting with a bunch of people having a fast paced match is a good way to go. Yo-Hey had a lot of charisma and it wouldn't surprise me if he was the star of the team. Rather fun opener here and the show is off to a nice start.

Haoh/Tadasuke vs. Kotaro Suzuki/Salvahe De Oriente

I think Haoh/Tadasuke are called Kongo. Oriente, who might be a mystery partner, starts with Haoh as this seems to be a junior heavyweight match. Haoh gets armdragged down to start and a dropkick puts him on the floor. Tadasuke gets double teamed and a basement dropkick sends him outside as well. Suzuki hits the big running flip dive and Haoh is sent back inside so Oriente can put on something like an Octopus hold.

Haoh comes back with something like a hurricanrana into a running kick to Suzuki's face. It's back to Tadasuke to run over both of them, setting up a delayed suplex to drop Suzuki. Suzuki comes back up and snaps off some strikes to the face, setting up the handspring elbow. That allows for the tag off to Oriente who hits a DDT, only to walk into one from Tadasuke. Haoh comes back in for a running headscissors, meaning it's time for some running shots to Oriente in the corner.

Back up and Haoh tries a super hurricanrana on Oriente but Suzuki runs in with a dropkick on the way down. They seemed to mistime the heck out of that one as I had to rewind it to see what they actually did. Anyway a 619 into a Falcon Arrow drops Haoh for two, with Tadasuke making a save. Suzuki plants

Tadasuke with a spinning Tombstone and Oriente gives Haoh a double underhook into double knees to the chest for the pin at 6:01.

Rating: C. This was fast paced and a fine way to keep things going. I'm going to assume that the one with the long blond hair (Tadasuke) was on the heel team here, though this felt like it was more about flying around at a pretty fast pace. You can always use a cruiserweight tag match on a show like this and it worked well enough here.

Kongo vs. Sugiura-gun

That would be Manabu Soya/Masa Kitamiya/Nio vs. Kazuyuki Fujita/Kendo Kashin/Nosawa Ronagi, because the idea of a singles match is an evil concept around here. Kongo jumps them before the bell and the beating goes straight to the floor. Back in and Kitamiya stomps on Nosawa, setting up a string of Kongo elbows. Kongo's posing is broken up by Kashin, who gets the same treatment, but with backslashes added in before the posing.

Soya comes in and whips Nosawa around some more, with Kitamiya coming in to help. Nosawa finally dropkicks Soya's knee out though and the hot tag brings in Fujita to trade the big man shoulders with Soya. For some reason Soya tries to strike it out and gets beaten down like he owes Fujita money. They take turns no selling suplexes and then clothesline each other down to keep things mostly even.

Kashin comes in but gets dropkicked down by Nio, who connects with a Lionsault for two. Kitamiya and Soya come in for a running clothesline from both sides but Nio's top rope splash hits raised knees. Back up and Kashin rolls Soya around to set up a cradle for two. With that not working, Kashin cranks on the leg to make Soya tap at 6:45.

Rating: D+. I wasn't feeling this one as it felt like one of Sugiura trying to beat up the trio at once and then repeating

the process with someone else. Kongo felt like they worked well together, but people kept coming and going from the match so much that it didn't get to flow at all. Not terrible, but it was pretty messy.

Keiji Muto vs. Shuhei Taniguchi

Well at least I recognize him. It's bizarre to see him as the angry old man without the pain but I think he'll be fine. They go with the grappling to start with Muto working on a headlock but having to go to the ropes to save his arm. Muto takes a breather on the floor but comes back in...and gets taken down into a bodyscissors. That earns Taniguchi a kneebar, meaning it's time to even up the rope breaks.

Taniguchi is back with a headlock into a chinlock to slow things down a bit. Muto slips out in a hurry but gets suplexed down, meaning it's time to go to the apron. Another shot takes Muto down and Taniguchi starts working on the leg on the floor. Back in and Muto shows him how it's done, with a dropkick to the knee and a dragon screw legwhip. A hanging swinging neckbreaker drops Taniguchi again and a half crab into an STF makes it even worse. Make that a Crossface, as I'm assuming Samoa Joe is a Muto fan.

The Power Drive elbow into a cross armbreaker has Taniguchi in even more trouble but he rolls to the rope, at least somewhat in desperation. There's another dragon screw legwhip but the Shining Wizard is blocked by a forearm to the knee. Back up and Taniguchi hits an ax handle to the chest for two but Muto kicks out the knee again. They strike it out until Taniguchi hits a German suplex into a chokeslam for two.

What looked to be Punt to the arm keeps Muto in trouble and a pair of top rope splashes give Taniguchi two more. Muto is right back with another pair of dragon screw legwhips and the Shining Wizard connects. This time it's Taniguchi up first but Muto kicks his way out of another chokeslam. A Shining Wizard

to the back of the head sets up a regular version to pin Taniguchi at 13:53.

Rating: B-. Muto looked old, but there was something to the idea of him using the classic offense that got him here, even against a younger guy like Taniguchi. There is always something to be said about the old dog having one more big win in him, and given that he would win the World Title soon after this, that seems to be the story they were telling. Muto was a little repetitive in there, but what are you expecting from someone pushing 60?

GHC Junior Heavyweight Tag Team Titles: Stinger vs. Momo No Seishun Tag

That would be Stinger (Hayata/Yoshinari Ogawa) challenging Momo No Seishun Tag (Atsushi Kotoge/Saisuke Harada) and egads I'm never going to keep this straight. I believe Harada is also the Junior Heavyweight singles champion, or at least he has another title with him. Stinger jumps the champs before the bell and Kotoge hits a Side Effect for two on Hayata. That's enough to send Hayata to the floor but he comes back in for the slugout with Harada.

Everything breaks down in a hurry and the champs nail stereo elbows in the corner. Some running kicks put Hayata on the floor as Momo, who seem to be the faces here, are starting very fast. Stereo dives put Stinger down on the floor again and it's Hayata being thrown back in for two. A toss into the air leaves him crashing back down so Ogawa tries his luck for a change. That means another trip out to the floor for all of two seconds, followed by Harada hitting a discus forearm back inside.

Kotoge adds a missile dropkick for two and it's a figure four necklock over the ropes to keep Ogawa in trouble. With that broken up, Hayata comes in and it's time to start working on Kotoge's arm. Ogawa drives in some knees to the arm to set up

a hammerlock as things slow down for the first time. The arm is wrapped around the rope so Ogawa can get in a chop, followed by Hayata's jumping kick to the arm.

They head outside with the arm going into the barricade as the target is fairly clear at the moment. Back in and Hayata grabs the keylock so Kotoge gets a foot on the rope. Hayata puts on a short arm scissors as Ogawa holds Harada back in a smart move. A rope is finally reached and Kotoge suplexes his way to freedom. That's not enough for the tag though as Ogawa is right back in to send the bad arm into the corner, followed by the post for a bonus. The seated armbar goes on and this time it's Hayata cutting off Harada. Dang that is going to be a heck of a hot tag after this much build up.

Harada finally breaks free and makes the save, allowing Kotoge to score with a superkick. Kotoge comes out of the corner with a running knee and that's enough for the hot tag off to Harada. House is cleaned with a variety of running forearms and Harada has to fight both of them off at once. Ogawa grabs the referee to block a suplex and kicks Harada down but he's right back up with a shot to the ribs.

Harada goes up but dives into a knee low, allowing the tag off to Hayata for two off a middle rope moonsault. Hayata's rather complicated rollup gets two but Harada catches him in a belly to back suplex. The hot tag brings in Kotoge to start cleaning house (it's rather dirty this match) but gets in a strike off with Harada.

Back up and Harada pulls him into a snap DDT for a breather but Ogawa comes in with a DDT of his own. Everything breaks down again and it's Ogawa getting double teamed, including a kick to the head into a Samoan driver for two. Hayata gets kneed in the face and it's a top rope elbow into a top rope splash. Kotoge hits a knee to Hayata but Ogawa is right there to tie the legs up for the pin and the titles at 23:29.

Rating: B. This got the time and built up throughout, making a heck of a title match and change. I liked the ending a lot, as Ogawa didn't really so much beat Kotage as much as he caught him, which makes sense given what they were doing here. This was the best match of the show so far by a good while and felt like a special moment with the title change. Good stuff here, as both teams were feeling it by the end.

Post match here is Sugiura-gun for what seems to be a brawl and a challenge to the new champs.

We get a video on I believe the next match. This aired earlier in the night.

National Title: Kenoh vs. Kaito Kiyomiya

Kenoh is defending and has a bunch of people in red shirts behind him (seems to be part of Kongo). They go straight to the slugout to start and trade some strikes to the face for one counts, meaning it's an early standoff. Kaito works on a headlock and hangs on despite a top wristlock attempt. A slam into a jumping elbow has Kenoh in trouble so they head outside, where Kenoh whips him hard into the barricade. A suplex brings Kaito over the barricade and they head back inside for a reverse chinlock.

Kenoh drops some knees on the back for two but Kaito is right back with a running clothesline. A spinning middle rope shot to the face drops Kenoh again and the fans approve, though not as much when Kenoh is sent outside. The really big flip dive has Kenoh in more trouble but Kaito is down with him. Back in and Kaito's missile dropkick gets two but a dropkick to the knee is countered into a jumping stomp to the ribs (that was sweet).

That puts them both down again but it's Kenoh up first with a running dropkick to the back of the head. Kaito flips over to the apron and comes back in with a slingshot shoulder to the back of the knee to get creative. There's a belly to back

suplex for two but it's time to strike it out and glare at each other a lot. An exchange of forearms goes to Kaito but Kenoh nails an enziguri to set up an ankle lock. That's broken up so Kenoh hits some middle rope moonsault knees (freaking ow man) into a top rope double stomp for another near fall.

That means it's time to go up again but this time, Kaito dropkicks him out of the air. Kenoh grabs a sleeper but Kaito breaks that up as well and they're both down. A spinning kick to the head rocks Kaito but he's right back up with a dropkick. The running knee rocks Kenoh and a German suplex drops him again. A tiger suplex gets two and Kenoh is done. Kaito slowly picks him back up but gets pulled into a sleeper with Kenoh on his back. It doesn't take long to put Kaito down and he taps out at 19:28.

Rating: B. Another good match here with both guys feeling like they had a game plan until one of them actually worked. Kaito looked like he was trying to pick Kenoh apart while Kenoh was looking for an opening to steal a win. It was another hard hitting match where you could figure out what is going on throughout. On top of that, it was nice to have the other Kongo guys just stand there instead of get involved. They were there and then they didn't do anything but watch. How nice is that?

We recap the Tag Team Title match. The champs were challenged and they accepted. Then we get a Masahiro Chono cameo where he shouts I AM CHONO. Again, this aired earlier.

Tag Team Titles: Sugiura-gun vs. M's Alliance

The Alliance (Masakatsu Funaki/Naomichi Marufuji) is challenging Kazushi Sakuraba/Takashi Sugiura. The Alliance also has a woman and two older men with them and they don't get their Twitter graphics. Chono is here with the champs (I would know those sunglasses anywhere) along with another guy not important enough to get a graphic. Funaki and Sakuraba go

to the mat to start with Funaki getting the better of things, including getting a bodyscissors and trying a choke.

A cross armbreaker is countered as well so Sakuraba goes to the ropes to avoid a kneebar. Sakuraba goes for an armbar (which seems to be a big deal), sending Funaki to the ropes for a change. Back up and Funaki hits him in the face, which draws quite the gasp. Sugiura comes in to slap Funaki in the face so Funaki strikes away and grabs a rear naked choke. The ropes save Sugiura as well so it's off to Marufuji and his shiny pants.

The MMA style ends in a hurry with a piledriver onto the apron to knock Sugiura silly. Sugiura pulls himself up for the slugout but it's off to Funaki for some kicks in the corner. Something like a crossface chickenwing sends Sugiura to the ropes so Marufuji hits a running double stomp for two. It's back to Funaki to strike away until Sugiura snaps off a German suplex to a very positive reaction. Sakuraba comes back in to choke Funaki but gets dropped on his head instead.

Marufuji comes back in to chop Sugiura, who is right back with a release gordbuster. A delayed superplex plants Marufuji for two as Sakuraba and Funaki fight to the floor. Marufuji grabs a short arm scissors but gets reversed into a guillotine to put him in even more trouble. Funaki is back in with a chinlock to break it up (that's kind of a new one) and Marufuji grabs Sliced Bread for two more.

Not to be outdone, Sugiura nails a spear and they're both down for a bit. Sakuraba comes back in to knock Funaki off the apron and prevent a tag, like a good partner should. We get the big Marufuji vs. Sakuraba chop off with Marufuji kicking him down. A big kick to the face gives Marufuji two but Sakuraba is back up with a pretty nasty (and weird) leglock on Marufuji. It's switched into a more traditional kneebar and Marufuji taps at 21:23.

Rating: B. Another good and hard hitting match with both teams feeling a lot more serious than in other matches. This definitely had more of an MMA feel to it and that made for a rather intense match. What we got here worked, though I have no idea what the deal was with Chono etc. The good thing is that it didn't seem to mind, which is the sign of a pretty good match. Nice stuff here, again.

Post match Chono gets in the ring and orders the woman and older man who came to the ring with the Alliance to come inside. Chono yells at them but shakes the woman's hand and they all pose. The older man tells the woman something and she slaps Chono in the face. The two of them leave but Chono poses with the champs and seems rather pleased. More posing ensues.

We recap the main event, which seems to involve challenger Katsuhiko Nakajima winning a competition of some sort to become #1 contender. Go Shiozaki seems ready for the challenge.

GHC Heavyweight Title: Go Shiozaki vs. Katsuhiko Nakajima

Shiozaki is defending and Nakajima (I believe part of Kongo) sits on the turnbuckle during the Big Match Intros. They start rather slowly as we see Shiozaki's taped up shoulder. Nakajima is backed into the ropes for a clean break, complete with a hard stare. A charge into the corner sends Nakajima bailing to the floor for a breather as they seem to have a lot of time here.

Back in and Shiozaki hits a flying shoulder for the first big knockdown and a chop gives him the second. Another missed charge lets Nakajima score with a superkick in the corner though and it's time to choke on the apron. Shiozaki blocks a kick though and snaps off an exploder suplex, with Nakajima landing head first on the apron for the terrifying crash. Kongo checks on Nakajima and thankfully he gets back inside.

Nakajima manages to knock him outside for a needed breather

and a running kick from the apron drops Shiozaki again. There's a hard whip into the barricade and Shiozaki makes it worse by chopping the post. Back in and...they head outside all over again so Nakajima can wrap the bad arm around the barricade. The arm goes into the post and Shiozaki has to dive back in to beat the count. Nakajima kicks at the arm some more and the seemingly not that bright Shiozaki uses the bad arm to chop.

This manages to put Shiozaki down and the cross armbreaker has him getting straight to the rope. Back up (as we are somehow fifteen minutes into this) and Shiozaki hits a boot in the corner, followed by a middle rope shoulder. The rapid fire chops (with the bad arm) set up a clothesline for two and a fisherman's buster gets the same. Nakajima manages an abdominal stretch but Shiozaki makes the rope and comes back with a hard clothesline. Another clothesline drops Nakajima again and they both need a breather.

They get up and chop it out again with Shiozaki starting to Hulk Up. Shiozaki's chops stagger Nakajima, who comes right back with some hard kicks to the chest. You can see Nakajima's chest breaking up and they trade suplexes, with Shiozaki getting the better of things. They get back up for another strike off but you can feel the energy going down. It's Nakajima bending first this time off a big chop but he says bring it on and they pick up the pace until an exchange of strikes put both of them down again.

Back up again and Nakajima hits some superkicks, only to have Shiozaki hit something like a suplex into a Rock Bottom. Nakajima gets smart by taking him down into a seated armbar, which he switches into a cross armbreaker with Shiozaki's other arm trapped underneath. That's countered as well so Shiozaki goes up, earning himself a spinwheel kick to the face.

Nakajima's super hurricanrana is blocked but they nearly crash

to the floor anyway. Another whip sends Shiozaki into the barricade but he bounces back with a hard lariat to put them both down on the floor. Back in again and Shiozaki hits a spinning slap to the head and something like an arm trap belly to back gets two. The moonsault hits raised knees and Nakajima kicks him in the head for a rather dramatic knockdown.

Something close to a Punt knocks Shiozaki even sillier and Nakajima rains down hard forearm. The referee checks on Shiozaki but he pulls himself up, only to get brainbusted back down for two. Nakajima can't believe the knockout and somehow Shiozaki manages a cobra clutch suplex.

There's another lariat for two on Nakajima and now the moonsault connects, but Shiozaki bangs up the arm so the delayed cover is only good for two. Another lariat drops Nakajima again and he looks a little spent. Yet another lariat gets two, with Nakajima needing the ropes for the save. Shiozaki is just done with this and picks Nakajima up for a standing lariat to retain at 42:40.

Rating: A-. The word that kept coming to my mind here was "struggle". This felt like a fight until one of them could no longer stand up and that made for a heck of a showdown. The exchange of strikes with both of them slowly being broken down got me pulled into the match and Shiozaki came off like the one who survived in the end. The arm being used so much was a bit much, but other than that, this was a heck of a fight and I wanted to see how it was going to end.

Post match we get a staredown between I believe Kazushi Sakuraba and Kenoh from earlier but they both leave. A guy in a black shirt stays and seems to praise Shiozaki, which the fans appreciate. Shiozaki says something and they shake hands, with the guy in the black shirt leaving. I believe Shiozaki thanks the fans and shouts NOAH a lot to wrap it up.

Commentary talks for a few minutes to wrap up the show.

Overall Rating: A-. This didn't start off great but they hit a stride and got into a heck of a groove a little over halfway through. The action was mostly awesome and while I have almost no idea what is going on here (though I could get the gist of things through the videos), I had a good time with a show which didn't feel as long as it was. Noah isn't exactly the top level promotion, but this was a very good show with all kinds of action. The main event was a blast, which doesn't surprise me given what I've seen from Shiozaki before. Rather awesome show here, assuming you can find it.

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**Wrestler of the Day – January
21: Arnold Skaaland/Go**

Shiozaki

No one really jumped off the page at me today so I'll do a double shot of two not bad guys. Today it's Go Shiozaki and Arnold Skaaland. We'll start with the old guy: Arnold Skaaland.

Skaaland is one of those guys that you hear about on occasion but almost no one remembers. He was a big deal back in the earlier days of the company, dating back to the 1950s. Skaaland also owned a piece of the Capitol Wrestling Corporation, which is probably part of the reason why he was pushed for so long. Here's a tag match from January 6, 1966, which is one of the oldest things I've ever reviewed.

Antonio Pugiliese/Arnold Skaaland vs. Angelo Savoldi/Tony Altimore

This is 2/3 falls. Antonio is billed as Bruno Sammartino's cousin, which is an old tactic to give people a head start to getting over. Before the match, the announcer praises Vince McMahon (senior) for making up next week's card already. We also hear the term dark match on television, as we hear of Bruno appearing in a tag match at the end of the taping next week. Skaaland's team is the crowd favorite here.

Altimore and Skaaland get things going here with Tony trying to lure him into the heel corner. This goes nowhere until Arnold slaps him in the face and hooks an armbar. Savoldi tries to come in so the faces change without tagging. The referee throws Savoldi out so the good guys cheat again, resulting in Arnold hooking another armbar. Altimore counters into a front facelock/choke which he keeps getting admonished for.

Antonio comes in and hooks a cravate on Altimore. He lays Altimore on the mat and pulls on Tony's arms with his feet on Tony's shoulders in a submission hold which gets a bunch of two counts. Antonio literally rides around on Altimore as he crawls on all fours. Tony finally gets up and yells a lot, nearly punching out the referee. Antonio takes Altimore down

again and hits a flying headscissors to bring Savoldi in as well.

Antonio snap mares Tony down as Savoldi tries to cheat some more, only to get hit in the chest. I don't think Savoldi has been in yet at all. Naturally as I say that he gets tagged in, only to run away, landing in the wrong corner. Skaaland, ever the nice guy, holds Angelo in the corner so Antonio can hammer away. The heels double team Antonio in the corner as I guess we're waiting on a hot tag to Arnold.

Scratch that as well as Antonio clotheslines Angelo down and brings in Skaaland for a full nelson. Altimore's cheating fails as he hits Savoldi in the exposed chest. Savoldi backdrops Skaaland and I think we get a botch, as Angelo looks surprised that it worked. Immediately thereafter, they do the same spot with Skaaland hooking a sunset flip for the pin and the first fall.

It's Skaaland vs. Altimore to start the second fall with Arnold hitting a quick monkey flip. The thud on the mat sounded like thunder going off. Tony starts choking and is immediately caught, but it's enough to let Savoldi get in some choking. Skaaland avoids a shot in the corner and the heels nearly have a fight over it. The legal guys circle each other for a bit before Altimore grabs Arnold's arm for some cranking.

Savoldi tries to come in but Antonio literally chases him away. Everything breaks down for a bit until we get back to normal with Altimore punching Skaaland down. Unfortunately he punches him into Antonio who picks Tony up and lays him on the top rope. Antonio pounds Altimore over and over again in the face before dropping some knees to the head for the jackknife pin.

Rating: C+. For a match that ran over twenty minutes, I had no problem with this at all. It wasn't exactly the Midnights vs. the RNRE, but this certainly wasn't boring. A lot of the moves are ones you would see today and it was clear who the good guys and bad guys were. The ending with Altimore getting beaten down and pinned was fine stuff. This wasn't

boring at all and I'm rather surprised by that.

We'll stick with the tag stuff and look at a match from Big Time Wrestling out of Detroit with the tag team champions the Hell's Angels facing JJ Dillon and Arnold Skaaland.

Hell's Angel's vs. Arnold Skaaland/Jim Dillon

The Angels (Ron and Paul Dupree in a biker gimmick) are tag champions here, which if the records I can find are correct, would put this at some point in 1968 or 1969, making JJ a rookie. I'm pretty sure this is non-title. The Angels take forever to get out of their gear and it's Angel #1 vs. Dillon, who is a cowboy here, to start. #1 takes Jim down by the trunks and the Angels do a switch without the tag to ensure that they're the heels.

The Angels change again to stay on Jim's arm as we might be in a squash match here. We stick with the old school tactics here as the good guys make a tag but the referee doesn't see it so the biased referee won't let it count. A second attempt works a bit better and Skaaland cleans house to a big reaction.

Back in and #1 gets to try his luck with Arnold but #2 gets in a cheap shot from the apron to take over again. Choking ensues and the Angels cheat even more to keep Skaaland in trouble. The referee admonishes the champions long enough to allow a tag off to Dillon but the Angels quickly slam him down and #1 drops a top rope knee for the pin.

Rating: D. This was a really sloppy match as it felt like they were trying to have a squash but the good guys got in too much offense. Dillon was very green at this point but the only way to get better is to be in the ring. The Angels were nothing to see either, though they had the crowd into their heel antics.

I'll fit in a singles match to make this actually about Skaaland. This is from December 19, 1977.

LouAlbanovs. ArnoldSkaaland

We get our first story here as Arnold won Manager of the Year and Albano is ticked off about it, resulting in them fighting over it. The face, Arnold, jumps Lou during introductions to show he means business. Fans are WAY into this which always helps. Albano runs immediately and still has his jacket on. A foreign object ends that though and we're ready to go.

Super Mario needs a shirt while wrestling. Allegedly these two weigh the same thing but I have a problem believing that one for some reason. Somewhere around the 8th shot with it the referee sees it or at least thinks he sees it so he plays Find the Object in Albano's Pants. That's a good one to play at a party where there are no women or alcohol. Arnold gets it and beats on Albano with it, busting him open.

Arnold pounds away as Albano tries not to fall down. And so much for that theory as Albano hits the floor. For about the 5th time he adjusts his tights and then runs to the back for the relatively cheap count out. I say relatively as this sets up another match down the road I'd assume.

Rating: D. Well the crowd was into it if nothing else. The match itself sucked but when it's a battle of managers how much can you expect? It's less than five minutes long though and Skaaland (dang that's hard to type) made a comeback to a nice pop so this worked fine for what it was. Match was awful though from a wrestling standpoint which is what we're going for here.

Skaaland is a guy that was good for his time but just doesn't hold up all that well in modern wrestling. Now that being said, the fact that it was a different era means a lot. Skaaland was nicknamed the Golden Boy so

having him be a generic guy like this makes sense. Also he sold tickets for the company as one of the top faces, even though he never won a singles title. He's an interesting piece of history but not much more than that.

On to Go Shiozaki who is best known for his time in Pro Wrestling Noah. Therefore, we'll start over there with Shiozaki challenging Nigel McGuinness for the ROH World Title on January 20, 2008.

ROH World Title: Nigel McGuinness vs. Go Shiozaki

The mat is green which is taking a bit of getting used to. Nigel ducks a big chop to start as we're still in the early feeling out process. The champion takes Go into the corner for some chops but this is Japan so it turns into a contest. Since that's going nowhere we hit the mat for a chinlock on Shiozaki that lasts all of five seconds. They head to the apron where Go tries a German suplex on the apron but settles for ramming Nigel's arm into the barricade. Another shot into the steel puts McGuinness down and a ram into the post makes him groan.

Nigel tries to sucker Go into chopping the post but Shiozaki fakes him out and chops Nigel again. The second attempt works a bit better and the chopping loses its power. This time Nigel is the one ramming his opponent's arm into the post before bending Go's hand around the piece of metal that connects the buckle to the ring. Back in and the champion takes Go down with chops of his own before avoiding a charge, sending Shiozaki's arm into the post. Nigel wraps it around the post again before putting on a Fujiwara armbar.

McGuinness gets all cocky as is his custom before putting on an armtrap chinlock, similar to a Tazmission. Now he sits on Go's back and cranks on the arm which has the fans interested. Shiozaki finally fights up but chops with the good arm, allowing Nigel to take over again. The Tower of London (Diamond Cutter off the top) is broken up so they trade forearms, with Go using the bad arm. A slam puts the champion down and a middle

rope knee drop gets two.

Nigel blocks a superkick but gets taken down with a fisherman's buster for two more. Go gets crotchted on the top and now the Tower of London connects for two. There's a seated armbar ala Leo Kruger's GC3 but Go is quickly in the ropes. A Tower of London off the apron knocks Shiozaki senseless but it takes awhile for him to get back in, meaning Alex only gets two. Back to the seated armbar but Go makes the ropes again.

Now Nigel gets creative by loading up a hammerlock belly to back superplex but Shiozaki counters into a cross body for two. Something resembling Rolling Germans get two for Go and the final one sends Nigel into the corner. A great looking moonsault gets two and Shiozaki locks in a Kimura. Nigel makes the rope and is placed on the top, only to come back by crotching Shiozaki on the top rope. A middle rope lariat gets one as Shiozaki starts Hulking Up.

Go comes back with a BIG sitout brainbuster but can't follow up with a cover. They slug it out from their knees before trading pinning combinations for two each. Off to an Anaconda Vice by Nigel but Go breaks free with the bad arm and gets into the ropes as well. A series of strikes get two for Go and he hits a suplex into a sitout Rock Bottom but Nigel counters the cover into another seated armbar, finally getting the tap.

Rating: B+. I liked this a lot more than I was expecting to even though I've always been a fan of Nigel's work. The arm work paying off in the end helped this a lot as I was afraid they were going to keep building on that and then going absolutely nowhere with it. Good, good match here with Nigel getting to show off.

We'll continue our international theme by going to Mexico for a four way tag team match for Shiozaki/Atushi Aoki's AAA Tag Team Titles from Triplemania 18.

Tag Titles: Los Maniacos vs. Beer Money vs. Atsushi Aoki/Go Shiozaki vs. Nicho/Joe Lider

This is under elimination rules and Shiozaki/Aoki are champions coming in. Los Maniacos are Silver Cain (Silver King from WCW who has lost his mask and Ultimo Gladiator). An interesting point here is that the champions are introduced by the wrong name with one guy not getting an announcement at all. Also from what I've read, only Konnan knew either their names or Beer Money's names. Cain basically is something like Mr. America where everyone knows it's Silver King but officially it's a different guy as his name is different if that makes sense.

The wrong music plays for the champions as it's Beer Money's song instead. Ok here is Beer Money to the right music. They're part of the Foreign Legion tonight. See how the group works now? In the back the final team is coming to the ring but some guy in a suit says Konnan is out there and not to go after them. That would be Nicho/Lider who are La Hermandad 187 (the 187 Brotherhood). Nicho is more famous as Psicosis without the mask. The Japanese guys and Lider almost get into it before the match.

No tagging here again it seems. This is going to take some getting used to. Roode and someone are on the floor. Also cut out the wide shots. I can't see anyone specifically for the most part. Four in the ring and four on the floor at the moment. I think Beer Money is on the floor. It's the Japanese guys and Los Maniacos in there at the moment. Nicho who is apparently a millionaire is down.

Only the champions (Japanese guys remember) are staying in the ring and on their feet the whole time. One hits a frog splash to I think Lider for two. Beer Money vs. Japanese guys at the moment. I know I'm saying Japanese guys a lot but it's the best description I can give you in a short amount of time. Hermanadad gets in Konnan's face with chairs but the champions jump them to save K-Dawg.

Beer Money works on Nicho with a wheelbarrow/Codebreaker combination. They set for the BEER MONEY thing but Hermanadad gets a pair of rollups for two each. Nicho vs. Aoki at the moment with the champion winning. Storm is ripping Cain's mask and almost has it off. Nicho vs. Aoki in the ring at the moment and Aoki is sent to the floor. Tope con Giro by Nicho takes down Aoki.

La Hermanadad beats on Aoki now until Shiozaki comes in. A middle rope Backstabber out of nowhere to Shiozaki puts him out and the champions are gone! Konnan FREAKS as we're down to three teams. Storm has a chair now and sets it up in the corner. Beer Money beats on the Hermanadad as we haven't seen much from the masked dudes. Beer Money screws up and Roode head winds up in Storm's crotch.

Los Manacos get into it again and go after 187 which is what I'm going to say instead of La Hermanadad. 187 is down but get up to hit stereo Downward Spirals to Beer Money. Storm takes what we would call a Mooregasm and then add...something which gets two on Storm. It was some double team move but it was hard to see what it was. Konnan distracts 187 again and a chair to the head of Lider by Storm ends them and we're down to Los Manacos vs. Beer Money for the titles.

Tower of Doom spot doesn't really work at all but it looked ok and got two for Roode. Nicho goes after Konnan with a chair but can't hit him. The fans are completely behind Manacos. Cain misses a moonsault and the slingshot DDT kills Gladiator as it's all Beer Money with the spinebuster to Cain. Heel miscommunication occurs though and it's Gladiator vs. Storm.

There are two referees in the ring for some reason. Spear takes down Storm for two. Roode and Cain have gone off to find a Bingo game or something. Storm hits a powerslam for two. Superkick by Storm misses and Cain hits a Death Valley Driver for the pin and the titles. HUGE pop for that as they're faces and Mexicans hold the titles again.

Rating: B-. This was a more fun match than the rest of them. While it was still hard to follow it was less difficult than the other matches. This lack of tagging thing is something I'm having issues getting used to. Either way, there was more of a flow here and I had a better idea of what was going on which is certainly a good thing.

We'll close it out in Kenta vs. Go Shiozaki from November 23, 2012 in the Global League Tournament. I'm aware that Kenta usually spells his name in all caps and I'm not typing it that way. Get over it.

Kenta vs. Go Shiozaki

Kenta appears to be the big crowd favorite. They strike it out to start with Kenta getting the better of it via kicks to the chest and a running knee to the ribs. Kenta charges into a boot in the corner and is lifted

up for a suplex before Go just drops him onto the floor. Go whips him into the barricade and they head back inside for a strike off until Shiozaki dropkicks him down for two.

They blow a spot in the corner where I believe Kenta was supposed to have a boot up so Go just awkwardly forearm him instead. Another attempt works a few seconds later with Kenta getting the boots up. Since this is Japan though, Go completely no sells it and hits him with a chop. There's a half crab but Kenta is quickly in the ropes for the break. Some running forearms knock Go down and Kenta locks on an STF.

Go is about to get the rope so Kenta lets go and drops him with a knee to the ribs for two. A springboard missile dropkick and a running boot in the corner have Go in trouble but he explodes out with a clothesline. I can live with this as he stays down after the clothesline so it's not as bad. Kenta tries an arm lock but Go comes back with a hard shot to the head for two. Kenta's GTS (he invented it) is escaped, allowing Go to superkick him (Kenta doesn't go down of course) and get two off a kind of chinlock suplex.

That pretty awesome suplex into a sitout Rock Bottom is almost countered into a guillotine choke but Go powers Kenta up for two. A big running lariat gets two for Go and a superkick actually puts Kenta down for a second. Go loads up a modified pumphandle slam but Kenta counters into a Hell's Gate followed by the YES Lock, making Shiozaki tap out.

Rating: C. REALLY annoying no selling aside, this wasn't bad. I totally get why Kenta is such a smark favorite: he's basically a video game character as a wrestler with a lot of the American finishing moves as regular moves (yes I'm aware he was likely doing a lot of them first). The match wasn't doing much for me as Shiozaki worked much better as a face than the heel he was playing here.

Go Shiozaki is talented but he didn't do much to stand out for me. The McGuinnes match was good but I've seen Nigel have good matches with just

about anybody. Shiozaki is a guy I've heard a few good things about but he's not someone that I have much of a desire to watch do anything more.

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