

New Japan Strong – May 7, 2022: The Other Half

Strong

Date: May 7, 2022

Location: Fairmont Hotel, Dallas, Texas

Attendance: 582

Commentators: Matthew Rehwoldt, Kevin Kelly

So this is a regular episode of the New Japan Strong show which was taped following their Lonestar Shootout special in Dallas, Texas over Wrestlemania weekend. The show was not advertised as a Strong taping so it was kind of a surprise to see the event split in two. This is the more storyline based stuff so let's get to it.

Note that I do not follow Strong so I apologize for missing any plot points or character details.

I was in the building for this show, sitting directly across from the entrance.

Bullet Club vs. Stray Dog Army

That could be Chris Bey/Hikuleo vs. Barrett Brown/Bateman. Well in theory at least as Hikuleo isn't in Bullet Club gear and seems to be having issues with the team. Brown and Bey start things off with a feeling out process until they go with the classic messing with each others' hair. Bey holds up Too Sweet and gets a middle finger until Bey takes him down for a basement dropkick. A snap half and half suplex drops Bey and Bateman comes in for a heck of a chop.

Hikuleo tags himself in though and runs over the rather large Bateman, allowing Bey to get in a cheap shot on the floor. Back in and Bey elbows Bateman in the back for two, setting up Hikuleo's legrop for the same. This lets commentary talk about

how Hikuleo doesn't seem to be overly rocking Bullet Club gear. Bey comes back in to work on a Fujiwara armbar before kicking at the chest...which just gets a glare from Bateman.

Hikuleo gets in a few more shots though, allowing Bey to grab a chinlock. Bateman finally fights up and makes the tag off to Brown, who kicks Bey in the face for two (with Hikuleo making no effort to break it up). Everything breaks down and Brown superkicks Hikuleo, who is back with a chokeslam for the pin at 12:18.

Rating: C+. The Bullet Club continues to look good every time he is in the ring and Hikuleo is a nice monster, Club loyalty issues aside. Other than that, Bateman is a weird enough looking big guy and Brown was passable in the time he was in the ring. Nice opener, with the Club winning to hopefully strengthen their bond a bit more. Maybe they need therapy?

Hikuleo walks away from a Too Sweet as we hear about Hikuleo's family having issues, which may have been due to Jay White.

Jonah vs. Blake Christian

This was actually filmed last, which didn't make a ton of sense. The much bigger Jonah takes Christian to the apron without much trouble before throwing him to the ground for a bonus. Christian avoids a charge in the corner though and kicks him in the ribs for a needed breather.

With Jonah on the floor, Christian tries a slingshot dive and gets pulled straight out of the air. Back in and Jonah whips him hard into the corner and we hit the waistlock. Christian fights up and hits a springboard tornado DDT, setting up a springboard 450 for two. Since it worked once, Christian tries another springboard but gets headbutted out of the air. The Tsunami finishes Christian at 6:52.

Rating: C. Jonah is one of those big guys who feels like he should be a major deal somewhere but is mainly stuck being the

athletic monster. That Tsunami still looks awesome and if Jonah wants in WWE or AEW, he'll be there as soon as possible. Christian is good as the smaller speed guy, but he was little more than a designated victim here.

Team Filthy vs. Alex Coughlin/Fred Rosser/DKC

That would be Tom Lawlor (Strong Openweight Champion)/JR Kratos/Royce Isaacs for Team Filthy, who wear tiny cowboy hats to the ring. You might remember Rosser better as Darren Young from WWE. Kratos jumps Coughlin on the floor and it's a brawl just after the bell. DKC goes after the rather large Kratos to no effect until we settle down to Rosser hitting a Death Valley Driver on Isaacs.

That's it for Rosser's offense at the moment though as he gets taken into the corner for the stomping from Lawlor. Something like a seated abdominal stretch has Rosser in more trouble and Kratos hits a running splash in the corner. Kratos knocks DKC and Coughlin off the apron and we pause for some Filthy pelvic thrusting.

Rosser manages a backbreaker to plant Isaacs on the apron as everything breaks down again. DKC pounds away at Lawlor's chest as Coughlin and Kratos have brawled to the back. That leaves DKC to take down Isaacs and Lawlor, the latter of whom is taken down by Rosser. Isaacs is back up with a super powerslam (cool) to finish DKC at 11:13.

Rating: C+. Oh yeah you could feel the storyline material here as they have a feud for the title going here and Rosser feels like a star. That is one of the bigger surprises that I've seen in wrestling in a good while as I wouldn't have bet on Rosser turning himself into something that much more interesting. Well done, and the match worked too, especially with Kratos looking like a monster and Rosser feeling like a star.

Post match, Rosser says he is going to be the next challenger

for Lawlor's title, but Lawlor says no. Lawlor says he's ready to prove that Rosser is the same non-star he was ten years ago. That being said, Lawlor will throw him a bone: if Rosser can beat Royce Isaacs and Jorel Nelson (Isaacs' regular partner) at the same time, he can have a title shot. Rosser thinks about it to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. It isn't a show I would want to watch on a regular basis but they have some good stuff here, including a focus on some wrestlers that you might not see otherwise. This felt a bit like New Japan's minor league show with an American feeling and that worked. The matches were all at least ok and the show flew by, which makes for a pretty nice combination over just shy of an hour. Good show and I can see why it has fans.

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