

Took in the 2018 WrestleCon Supershow

And super isn't too far off.

Last year in Orlando, one of the most entertaining shows I took in was the WrestleCon SuperShow. This is pretty much a big show featuring a collection of old school wrestlers, international stars and young up and comers thrown together for a fun show. There aren't many storylines and the whole thing is built around just having a fun night of wrestling. Last year's show was incredible and this one had a lot to live up to. Let's get to it.

Before we got started PWG's Excalibur came out and said that going forward, the SuperShow would be named after Mark Hitchcock, who worked for Highspots (the company that helped produce the show) and passed away while on his honeymoon just before this year's event. This was a cool moment and a nice gesture.

The show started about half an hour late, but that's to be expected at something like this. As usual, there were several wrestlers outside at their merchandise tables, all of whom were very polite and more than willing to chat with you, even if you weren't buying anything.

1. Penta El Zero M b. Joey Janela – Pumphandle Driver, 7:52, C.

I've never actually seen a Janela match...and I don't think I get it. He's a name I've heard a lot about over the last year or two but I really don't get the hype. The match was nothing of note, save for a sick THUD when Janela hit a Death Valley Driver onto the apron...two minutes into the match. A bunch of superkicks set up Penta breaking Joey's arm (or close to it at least) and hitting the pumphandle driver for the pin. Nothing

of note here, but last year's opener wasn't great either.

2. Joey Ryan's Andy Kaufman Intergender Challenge – DQ, 1:23.

Now this was interesting as Ryan is now doing the Kaufman intergender challenge where he'll fight any woman because a man can beat them. This included Ryan wearing Kaufman's robe and the exact same ring gear, down to the white body suit and blue shorts. He even did the same soap promo that Kaufman made famous in Memphis about thirty five years ago. The problem is this just made me want to see Jerry Lawler come out and beat Ryan up....AND JERRY LAWLER ANSWERED THE CHALLENGE!

This was one of those surprise moments that makes this show cool: it felt like the right move and is a cool idea because it's what makes the most sense in this situation. The problem was Lawler couldn't use the piledriver in Louisiana, which he didn't seem to know coming in. Instead he kicked Ryan low, and if you know Joey Ryan, you can imagine the shock on Lawler's face. A fireball to the crotch got a DQ, but don't worry because Ryan ensured us that everything down there was fine. Of note: this was thirty five years to the day that Lawler first piledrove Kaufman. Cool moment, barely a match of course.

3. Team Dashwood b. Team Lee – Quintuple submission, 10:23, C.

Tenille Dashwood, Madison Eagles, Nicole Savoy, Shazza McKenzie, Tessa Blanchard

Trevor Lee, Caleb Konley, Zane Riley, Jake Manning, Maxwell Jacob Friedman

This one had A LOT to live up to after last year's incredible ten man tag. The ten person match was incredible and the most fun I've ever had watching a single wrestling match. This year went more with the current theme of the women's revolution and there's nothing wrong with that.

Dashwood (formerly Emma) was crazy over and showed more fire than she ever did in WWE with a very energetic entrance. The It's All About Me character works very well for her and shows how awesome she could have been in WWE if they hadn't botched it. I'm not overly familiar with most of the women, but I've seen Eagles before. She's easy to remember as she stands about 6'1 and towered over almost everyone on either team.

Before the match, Lee said that if his team won, his three partners other than Konley would be signed to Impact Wrestling. You can imagine how well this went over. What also went over fairly poorly was Konley saying we might as well just start with Dashwood kissing him so he sat in a chair where comedy, in the form of the 300lb Riley accidentally kissing him instead, ensued.

The rest of the match was what you would expect: the women being competitive and using technique while the men lumbered around like idiots (including Manning, the Man Scout, reading his scouting manual while wrestling, as is his custom). There was a great series of dives to the floor and a sequence of at least eight people having a submission on someone at the same time. As in all eight were in one big chain, almost like a submission centipede. Stupid and contrived, but exactly what you would expect from a show like this, which was fine.

The finish saw a quintuple submission with the men all tapping at the same time, which was a very abrupt ending. I was expecting this to go a lot longer, but it proved its point well enough. It's not a great match but it did its job. Like I said though, last year's match wasn't being touched and everyone knew it.

4. Tomohiro Ishii b. Jeff Cobb – Suplex, 15:12, B+.

Ishii is a tough guy from New Japan and Cobb is better known as Matanza from Lucha Underground (very friendly guy who chatted with me about Nintendo 64 vs. Super Nintendo before

the show). This was a hoss fight of the highest degree and they didn't try to make it anything else.

They slugged it out (with an exchange of forearms that lasted over a minute) and threw each other around until one of them couldn't get up. Cobb made the mistake of hitting him once too often though and Ishii beat the tar out of him, finishing with a suplex that was supposed to be his signature brainbuster. This is what Cobb vs. Lashley from last year should have been and Cobb looked like a star. I wouldn't be surprised if he wasn't in WWE by this time next year.

5. Rey Fenix/Rey Horus b. Bandido/Flamita – Falcon Arrow to Bandido, 12:22, B+.

Horus is better known as Dragon Azteca Jr. from Lucha Underground. I'm not even going to try to describe this match as I couldn't do it justice. This was the most insane, high flying match that I've ever seen with everyone doing one crazy dive and flip after another. It was the kind of lucha match you would want to see and is well worth going out of your way to find. The fans threw money into the ring after the match and I can't say I disagree. Just in credible stuff and easily the match of the night from an entertainment perspective.

6. Mexicools b. Jason Cade/Matt Classic/Teddy Hart – Rollup to Cade, 10:00, C+.

This was Chico El Luchador/Psychosis/Super Crazy with Juventud Guerrera only showing up for the introductions. I'm not sure why A, someone thought we needed a Mexicools reunion and B, why this was put on after the great lucha match before it. It wasn't a bad match by any stretch but it didn't really need to be on the show, other than a way to get Cade (big star in last year's ten man tag) and Classic (Colt Cabana in a mask doing an old school wrestler character) on the show.

7. Will Osprey b. Sammy Gueverra, Adam Brooks and Shane Strickland – Oscutter to Gueverra, 12:34, B.

Ospreay was very, very banged up coming into this, to the point where it wasn't clear if he would be able to wrestle over the weekend. He did compete (at least twice) but his neck and shoulder were so banged up that you could tell it wasn't his full speed. This was the third match in a row built around high flying and it was starting to wear on the crowd. Ospreay was a treat to see, but it would have been better if he hadn't been hurt (not his fault of course).

It was entertaining while it lasted with Brooks playing a great heel and Gueverra always being fun to watch. The Oscutter looked great too and finished one of the better matches of the night. The injuries to Ospreay were just too much though and it was clear that he probably shouldn't have been in the ring for a little while longer.

8. David Starr/Brian Cage/Minoru Suzuki b. Sami Callihan/Juice Robinson/Hiroshi Tanahashi – Armbar to Callihan, 14:48, C+

Tanahashi and Suzuki were surprise partners and of course got some of the strongest reactions of the night with Suzuki's in particular being awesome. Cage tore the house down here with some great looking dives, including one to the floor to take everyone down. In short, someone his size shouldn't be able to do that. Suzuki made Callihan tap to an armbar and beat up Tanahashi post match. That helped a bit as they never actually touched during the match. This wasn't a great match

9. Golden Lovers b. Chuck Taylor/Flip Gordon – Golden Trigger to Gordon, 13:38, C+

Gordon was a mystery partner after Taylor's regular partner, Trent Barretta, broke his arm and tore his bicep. The mystery partner was a pretty big factor in the match and Chuck had some swerve options, including the Swamp Monster (a guy in a Cousin Itt (look him up) suit), Dan Barry (didn't show up), Orange Cassidy (Taylor: "He's probably asleep.") and Barretta himself. Rocky Romero came out after Barretta, sending Taylor

into a rant about how Romero already stole him once and how much Taylor hated him.

Flip finally came out and said he didn't want to be his partner as he wanted to hear about being on All In. Taylor said he had been on the phone with the REAL leader of the Bullet Club, Cody. If Flip wins, he's All In. The match was about what you would expect, with Barretta coming back down and handing Taylor a cigarette and sunglasses in a bit I didn't understand. The result wasn't surprising, but that wasn't the point of course. Entertaining way to end a show that went on too long.

Post match Taylor asked for a match with the Golden Lovers when Barretta was healthy (calling him an idiot for coming back too soon) and Omega thanked us for coming.

Overall, the show might not have been as good as last year's but it was still very entertaining. They got in a bunch of surprises (Lawler legitimately got me) and some very good matches, but comparing it to last year's show isn't exactly fair. It was a very good venue (my seats were looking down at the ring and if I looked over my shoulder I could see the talent on a small balcony before and after their matches) and the crowd was hot all night. Good show, and definitely something I'd take in again whenever I go back to Wrestlemania.

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NJPW G1 Special in USA Night Two: The Omega of the Alpha

NJPW G1 Special in USA Night Two

Date: July 2, 2017

Location: Long Beach Convention and Entertainment Center, Long Beach, California

Attendance: 2,305

Commentators: Jim Ross, Josh Barnett

We're back with night two of the show, though this didn't air on American TV until five days later. The big story tonight is the United States Heavyweight Title, which will be decided for the first time ever. Other than that we have Hiroshi Tanahashi defending the Intercontinental Title against Billy Gunn for reasons I can't quite comprehend. Let's get to it.

JR and Barnett welcome us to the show and recap the tournament so far. The Intercontinental Title match gets some attention of its own.

Jushin Thunder Liger/David Finlay/Kushida vs. Tempura Boyz/Yoshitatsu

Before we get going, we hit the posedown for some nice reactions from the crowd. Eh fine enough to open a show, especially when you have a major fan favorite like Liger in there. Liger puts Komatsu in a modified surfboard to start before sending him into the barricade. For some reason this gives us a Who's On First routine from the announcers because they aren't the best pairing in the world.

Everything breaks down with Liger getting triple teamed in the corner

with a flapjack getting two. The Shotei Palm Strike drops Komatsu again though and it's a hot tag to Kushida as things speed way up. The announcers talk about food as Kushida grabs a Hoverboard Lock on Tanaka, only to be reversed into an over the shoulder backbreaker. A package piledriver doesn't work on Kushida and it's time to slug it out. Something like a Pele kick drops Tanaka but he catches Kushida in a German suplex.

Yoshitatsu comes in with a missile dropkick and is immediately booted out of the building, which apparently is a big thing for him. I always liked the guy but New Japan fans can't STAND the guy. Finlay comes back in and runs him over for two, only to get kned in the face for the same. Everything breaks down and it's a triple submission with a Stretch Muffler making Komatsu tap at 8:54 while Liger had Tanaka in a surfboard and Yoshitatsu was in a Hoverboard Lock.

Rating: C+. Fine choice for an opener here as the fans are always going to eat Liger up with a spoon. The guy is really entertaining (his music is worth the price of admission alone) and Kushida is one of my favorites in the whole promotion. I'd still like to know what's up with Yoshitatsu but I'm sure it's something he did before.

IWGP United States Title Tournament Semi-Finals: Kenny Omega vs. Jay Lethal

Lethal has bad ribs coming in. Feeling out process to start and Omega wastes no time kicking him in the bad ribs, followed by another one to the chest. The ribs (both the good and the bad) are sent into the barricade a few times as it's very one sided to start. Back in and the One Winged Angle is broken up but it's too early for the Lethal Injection. Instead it's three straight superkicks (well if the Bucks aren't going to do them...), followed by the Lethal Injection. Lethal pops back up for three straight suicide dives.

Hail to the King gets two and Jay starts in on the leg as he channels Ric Flair. The Figure Four is broken up so he tries another Lethal Injection, only to have Omega block it with a somewhat botched Codebreaker. Eh I'll give it five and a half stars anyway. Omega is limping a bit but comes

back up a few shots to the ribs. You can't say his psychology is off. The tape finally comes off the ribs and a few knees to the back get two.

Lethal fights out of the corner and grabs a Blue Thunder Bomb but can't follow up because of the ribs. The dragon suplex staggers Jay and the running knee to the jaw gives Omega two. A gutwrench sitout powerbomb (always looks cool) is good for the same but the One Winged Angle is countered. The counter is countered into the One Winged Angel though and Omega is in the finals at 12:58.

Rating: B. The psychology was working here, even if the finish was a bit off. Still though, these two beat the heck out of each other and the ribs vs. the knee made enough sense. That being said, there was no way that Omega wasn't at least making the finals of this thing so it's not like the ending was in any real doubt.

IWGP United States Title Tournament Semi-Finals: Zack Sabre Jr. vs. Tomohiro Ishii

There's a weird visual here as Ishii is really thick but the lanky Sabre is a good four inches taller than him. Ishii forearm him in the face to start and Sabre hurts himself with a headbutt. Some hard chops in the corner have Sabre rocked but he keeps sticking his chest out asking for more.

With JR trying to figure out what Sabre is thinking, he gets in a kick to Ishii's arm and we have a target. It doesn't make the early strategy any more logical but at least he's doing his thing now. We hit something like a modified Tequila Sunrise with Sabre letting go for no apparent reason. Ishii knocks him back again and hits a loud running clothesline in the corner.

They head up top and Sabre grabs a Kimura, earning himself one heck of a superplex to bring him back down. Sabre comes right back with something like a reverse cross armbreaker but Ishii suplexes him into a heap. As JR says Sabre is the "TWG" World Champion, Ishii misses the sliding lariat and gets caught in another armbar. Sabre grabs the leg as well before wrapping his legs around the neck (these holds are INSANE every time).

Ishii dives over for the ropes for the break so Sabre kicks at the arm again. That's fine with Ishii who HITS HIM IN THE FACE. I love simple counters like that. Ishii counters yet another armbar so Sabre kicks him square in the chest. Not that it matters though as Ishii pops up with the brainbuster to advance at 11:45.

Rating: C+. Ishii is slowly growing on me but I'm in awe of a lot of those holds that Sabre throws out there. I don't even understand how he does most of them, let alone how anyone gets out of them. It's not a great match here but it was rather entertaining, which is all you need a lot of the time.

Los Ingobernables de Japon vs. Dragon Lee/Jay White/Juice Robinson/Volador Jr./Titan

JR basically guarantees a spot fest here. This is New Japan vs. CMLL and hopefully JR can remember which luchador is which. Volador Jr., in a mask unlike last night, starts with Naito, who keeps walking away from lockups. Instead Naito rolls straight into his pose so it's off to Bushi and Takahashi to double team Volador, who has no problem sending them outside for an Asai moonsault.

Everything breaks down with Naito choking on the floor as Bushi chokes Titan inside. Sanada ties up Juice and Titan for kicks to the back of the tights. JR: "We don't have any idea what's going on either." Titan's comeback is cut off by Naito's enziguri as the announcers go into a discussion of Trish Stratus' chest. The hot tag brings in Robinson so clean house with a spinebuster planting Evil.

Takahashi eats a hard lariat and it's off to Lee to speed things up again. They chop the heck out of each other with the fans getting into it until Lee flips out of a hurricanrana. It's off to Evil vs. White (who I forgot was in this) with Jay getting the better of it off a clothesline. White gets cut off by a guillotine over the ropes and Evil gets in a side slam.

Everything breaks down again and it's White getting quadruple teamed inside. Robinson makes the save and cleans house and Titan hits a top rope Asai moonsault to take out Takahashi. White gets two off a Rock

Bottom to Bushi but a Flatliner is enough to give Jay the pin at 12:29.

Rating: C+. It was fun and energetic but things go down a bit when you have the announcers riffing on the match being such a mess. It also doesn't help when there's very little setting the faces apart and the announcers didn't seem to know anything about them. Still a fun match, though I'm getting a bit numb to all these multi man tags.

Bullet Club vs. War Machine/Michael Elgin

It's the Guerrillas of Destiny and Hangman Page here and they're flanked by Chase Owens and FREAKING HAKU, the father of the Guerrillas. Well that works. Page and Elgin get things going with Adam having no problem forearming him in the face. It's fine with Elgin too, who BLASTS Page in the face with a forearm of his own.

That goes nowhere so it's off to the tag teams with War Machine shrugging off a double dropkick and throwing the brothers at each other. Everything breaks down and Elgin suplexes Page, followed by Rowe slamming Hanson on top of him. Hanson rubs his beard on Tama's face, which might be approved of in some areas. Loa comes in for an Oklahoma Stampede of all things and you know JR is happy with that one.

The beating of Hanson continues with the Bullet Club taking turns picking him apart. Hanson finally avoids a charge and makes the hot tag off to Elgin for the power man offense. The Falcon Arrow gets two on Page and everything breaks down again. Tama gets in a jumping neckbreaker on Elgin but Hanson cannonballs off the top to take out the Guerrillas. A fireman's carry/Blockbuster combo drops Hanson so Rowe comes in to hit people very hard. Page comes back in with a heck of a lariat though and the Rite of Passage ends Rowe at 11:17.

Rating: D+. This felt like they had a six man tag for the sake of having a six man tag. War Machine won the titles the night before and I really don't think they needed to set up a new match so quickly. Since all six of them appeared on the show the night before, they really could have cut this out to let the show breathe a bit more.

The New Japan boss thanks the fans for making this special and promises

to bring the company back to America....in 2018. It's been an impressive weekend but I expected something a bit sooner than that.

IWGP Junior Heavyweight Tag Team Titles: Young Bucks vs. Roppongi Vice

The Bucks are defending and yes, these teams are fighting AGAIN. Now at Best in the World, the Bucks had the best match I've ever seen them have because they spared the superkicks. Let's see if they keep that up or revert to the form that gets them the most praise. Nick throws a superkick less than a minute in but goes with the Sharpshooter instead, sending Romero bailing to the ropes.

All four come in and no one can hit anything, including a quadruple dropkick for a standoff. The Bucks are sent into the corner but come back with a double superkick (oh here we go) to knock Vice outside. Matt hits a heck of a moonsault to the floor, only to have Nick (the announcers are getting them confused again) miss a big flip dive back inside. Nick grabs Beretta off the apron and runs him up the aisle for a heck of a powerbomb as a fan yells something about Hot Topic.

Back in and the Bucks stay on Romero as we're doing the same "one member of Vice gets powerbombed in the aisle" formula for at least the third time. We hit the chinlock for a bit before the Indy Taker is broken up but there's no one for Romero to tag. JR: "It's almost like a handicap match." Thanks Jim. A double clothesline drops the bucks and Beretta is back up to take the tag.

Matt takes a tornado DDT but the powerbomb into the enziguri in the corner cuts Beretta off. Another Sharpshooter (I'm assuming that's a new thing for the Bucks because reasons) is broken up so Romero gets powerbombed onto Beretta for two. Romero gets in a double hurricanrana but eats a double superkick. A 450 and moonsault onto the back get two and Nick gets in a great shocked face. It's back to the Sharpshooter (NOT a Scorpion Deathlock JR/Barnett. There's a difference and you really should know that, even if you sound bored with this show.) but Romero makes a quick save.

Sliced Bread #2 (not a Blockbuster Barnett) is broken up so Beretta piledrives Nick on the apron. For those of you counting, Nick is on his

feet twelve seconds later. A cradle piledriver gives Beretta two and Strong Zero gets the same and...my goodness we actually get tags. For what? Like seriously, for what?

Romero and Matt come in but the tagging part is quickly forgotten, allowing the Bucks to (mostly miss, though it's fair in this case) get in a springboard flip Meltzer Driver to Romero on the floor. This is actually a tribute to Meltzer's father, who passed away recently before this show. Romero is dead so Beretta comes back in and spits at Matt, earning himself a superkick to the face and two to the back. Another Meltzer Driver to Romero sets up double Sharpshooters for the tap at 22:43.

Rating: B-. Too long here but, again, the lack of superkicks made it a more entertaining match. Granted it was brought down a good bit by the length and the sloppiness that came with some of the ridiculous flips. I'm not a big fan of the Meltzer stuff but the fans dig it enough so it's hard to get that mad about it. The Bucks are entertaining but hard to watch at the same time, if that makes sense.

Post match, Ricochet runs in and takes out both Bucks, saying he wanted to be here but a certain Underground fighting company (Lucha Underground if you're a bit slow) wasn't being very nice. He wants a shot at the titles with Ryusuke Taguchi as his partner. This segment didn't air in America due to Ricochet's contract with Lucha Underground.

Post dark segment Roppongi Vice lists off their five year checklist, which they've already accomplished. So now they're done because it's time for Beretta to move up to the heavyweight division.

Bullet Club vs. Chaos

Bullet Club: Bad Luck Fale/Cody/Marty Scurll/Yujiro Takahashi

Chaos: Briscoe Brothers, Kazuchika Okada/Will Ospreay

Just in case you didn't get enough multi-man tags yet. Scurll and Mark get things going as we hear about the Briscoes having 70,000 chickens. Red Neck Kung Fu is countered by the bird pose and we hit a standoff. One

heck of a chop has Marty scurrying over to the ropes so it's off to Cody vs. Jay.

Cody tags Scurll back in but it's back to Scurll, then Cody, then Scurll and this is the reason both shows were three and a half hours. The fans want Fale so it's off to the big man...who tags Cody right back in. Now the fans want and get Yujiro and he tags right back to Cody. DID YOU GET THE JOKE YET??? I'm not sure it sunk in. I'm aware Cody has a bad shoulder, but maybe they should just have him sit out and have a match if you just have to get this on the card.

Okada comes in so Cody bails as we're about three minutes straight now with no action. Ospreay is sitting in the front row having a beer before coming in to chase Cody around.....for a meeting in the corner. Now it's back to Jay and the lockup gets a pop. Cody powerslams Jay down, making me think that the comedy (as HILARIOUS as it was) was an even bigger waste of time.

Ospreay comes in and kicks away at the chest. Will misses a dive though and it's Yujiro coming in to stomp away. Yujiro dances a bit, then Scurll dances a bit, then Cody flips us off and gyrates the hips. Fale, in his Make Jobbers Great Again shirt, sits on Ospreay's chest for two but Scurll charges into a boot in the corner. Scurll does his big chickenwing thing, earning himself an enziguri.

Jay comes in to fire off the clotheslines and hands it off to Okada for the real house cleaning. A DDT drops Fale but Okada can't slam the monster. The second attempt works a bit better (naturally) but walks into a Samoan drop, followed by a splash for two. Cody comes back in and eats the flapjack (hopefully with some syrup) before it's back to Ospreay, who catches him with a spinning Stunner.

Scurll snaps the fingers, which JR calls illegal for sure. Uh, why exactly? We get the parade of people hitting each other in the face but Scurll busts out the umbrella to block the Rainmaker (how appropriate). Ospreay kicks Scurll and Cody in the face though and moonsaults over the top to take Marty out again. Will tries another springboard but Cody is right there with the Disaster Kick. Cross Rhodes ends Ospreay at 14:00.

Rating: C. This got better later on but I was getting very sick of that stupid comedy schtick. This was a great example of a match that could have been cut as Cody already had his big match and pinning Ospreay in an eight man tag isn't exactly going to reignite whatever he had going on. We already saw these people last night and it really didn't help the show in any real way. It's ok to let the show breathe a bit instead of cramming everything in.

We recap the IWGP Intercontinental Title match with Billy Gunn promising to bring his A game. Gunn's A game wasn't great at the peak of his career and I don't think I want to see what it's going to be like in his 50s.

IWGP Intercontinental Title: Hiroshi Tanahashi vs. Billy Gunn

Gunn is challenging and no, it still doesn't make sense no matter what. Feeling out process to start until Gunn shoulders Tanahashi away. They fight over a top wristlock until Tanahashi takes him down with a headlock. We're four minute into this and that shoulder block is the high spot so far.

The announcers talk about Lou Thesz as Gunn suplexes him down and throws the champ outside. Tanahashi's bad arm is wrapped around the post as I have a bad feeling we've already reached the peak of Gunn's abilities. A Jackhammer sets up a top wristlock and Gunn actually adds a low superkick.

Tanahashi gets punched out of the air but pulls Gunn's trunks down to reveal....more trunks. I guess Tanahashi gets bored and comes back with forearms, only to get caught with a cobra clutch slam. The Fameasser gets two but Tanahashi hits a quick Sling Blade and the High Fly Flow (with a SUCK IT) retains the title at 14:26.

Rating: D-. This is a situation where the bigger problem is what else it could have been. There are a TON of names on this roster that you could have put in there (pick one of Los Ingobernables for instance) and they go with Gunn. I get that he's a bigger American name but I really don't buy that they couldn't have brought in almost ANYONE else and gotten a better match. For the promotion based on in-ring work, this really didn't work, though it did to by very quickly.

IWGP United States Heavyweight Title: Kenny Omega vs. Tomohiro Ishii

For the inaugural title and Omega has the Bucks with him. They get straight to the physicality with an exchange of strikes before Omega slaps him in the face. Thankfully he's smart enough to stay on him and get Ishii down before he can hand Omega one of his own body parts. Ishii tells him to kick harder and even sits there for them.

They head into the crowd as we go to the Attitude Era style brawling, which makes sense for someone like Ishii. Back in and Ishii slugs away before Omega invites him to get in a kick of his own. Ishii does just that and Omega suddenly realizes that was a REALLY BAD IDEA. The exchange of loud chops goes to Ishii and a powerslam gets two. Omega comes back with some ax handles to the chest and a middle rope moonsault for the same.

Kenny hits a big flip dive over the top and the Bucks set up a table. Josh: "The Bucks with their own gimmick table." We'll save that for later though as Kenny goes with a top rope dropkick to the back of Ishii's head. Ishii doesn't take kindly to all of these chops though and starts staring Omega down instead of selling the forearms. A hurricanrana gets Omega out of trouble because hitting him in the face over and over has no effect but a short flip onto your back knocks you silly.

Ishii takes him to the apron and blocks a German suplex through the table. Instead Omega tries a dragon suplex through the table so Ishii BITES THE ROPE to hang on, only to have his teeth give way so it's the dragon suplex through the table. That's only good for a nineteen count so Kenny blasts him in the head with a series of knees. A final knee is blocked so Omega tries a final, final knee, followed by another knee for two.

The One Winged Angel is countered into a DDT and Ishii hits a good looking top rope superplex for another near fall. They have another slugout until Omega hits the brainbuster for two. Ishii gets in a knee of his own, followed by the sliding lariat. Naturally Ishii is right back with a One Winged Angel of his own but Omega knees him down (AGAIN), followed by a reverse hurricanrana. Another running knee to the face sets

up the One Winged Angel for the pin and the title at 31:22.

Rating: A-. It's good and had the right finish but those running knees to the face were getting on my nerves. The best positive about this match was how fast it went by. There are several matches with this much time that feel close to twice this long but this one flew by like it was half the time. Ishii was a good foil for Omega here and the win feels important, even if it was fairly obvious.

Post match Cody comes out and snatches the belt away from Kenny, only to wrap it around his waist instead. The rest of the Bullet Club comes out to celebrate as Kenny grabs the mic. He's had a bunch of hardships this year but what separates the Bullet Club from the rest of the world is they never give up, just like the rest of the people here tonight. The fans made this show and New Japan is back next year. They rule the wrestling world and that's never changing. This was a good way to end the show as Omega is one of the faces of the promotion and the face of the promotion in America.

The announcers quickly wrap things up.

Overall Rating: B. I definitely liked the first night better but it's not like this one was bad. The problem here is the first night felt like a grand spectacle as the promotion made its big debut. This one though felt like they were cramming in a bunch of stuff that didn't need to be on there. I couldn't really think of anything that could have been cut off the first night but this one had multiple moments that could have been trimmed or flat out eliminated.

The Tanahashi match, which should have been a major deal, was a complete misfire and the War Machine stuff felt like it could have come weeks from now instead of immediately. It's still a good show and a big success for the promotion but this show could have had a good half hour to forty five minutes cut out to really improve things.

Overall for the two nights, it's definitely a great debut, but you know the fans are going to get ahead of themselves. They put on two very good shows in front of less than 5,000 fans combined in the second biggest market in the country. It's a very solid performance for the independent

level around here but they're FAR away from being in WWE's universe over here, which to be fair New Japan certainly seems to know. If this show is even something of a hit among the casual fans, we'll see where they can go from there but for now, just consider it a success and start to build from here.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the Histories of Saturday Night's Main Event and Clash of the Champions, now in PAPERBACK. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2017/05/19/history-of-saturday-nights-main-event-and-clash-of-the-champions-now-in-paperback-plus-price-drops/>

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New Japan G1 Special in USA Night One: Welcome To Our Turf

New Japan G1 Special in USA Night One

Date: July 1, 2017

Location: Long Beach Convention and Entertainment Center, Long Beach, California

Commentators: Jim Ross, Josh Barnett

This has the potential to be either a major moment in history or something that won't be remembered in a few years. New Japan has been the

favorite promotion of a lot of wrestling fans in recent years and now they've come to America on their own instead of co-promoting with someone like Ring of Honor. This is the first of a two night event, the latter of which will air six days from now. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks back at the history of the company (not exactly in depth) and the build to the show. This includes a variety of big matches over both nights and how important it is for the competitors in a tournament for the inaugural IWGP United States Title.

Here are the tournament brackets:

Michael Elgin

Kenny Omega

Jay Lethal

Hangman Page

Juice Robinson

Zack Sabre Jr.

Tomohiro Ishii

Tetsuya Naito

We look at the tape of the match for the World Title match between Kazuchika Okada and Cody Rhodes.

We get some pre-show ceremonies with the announcers talking over both the Japanese announcements and the English translations. This goes on for several minutes with the announcers talking about the tournament and making some predictions. If nothing else it's VERY weird to hear the term "belt" so many times.

Roppongi Vice/Will Ospreay/Briscoe Brothers vs. Young Bucks/Marty Scurll/Yujiro Takahashi/Bad Luck Fale

Chaos vs. Bullet Club, again. Ospreay and Scurll start things off

because...well who else was going to? Scurll flips away from him a few times and does the bird wings thing a few times. Ospreay sends him outside and apparently we're under lucha rules (never mentioned by commentary) so it's off to the Briscoes to dropkick Fale down. Takahashi gets caught in between the Brothers, who JR has confused.

Mark hits his running Blockbuster off the apron and it's off to Roppongi Vice vs. the Bucks (And for once it's not something that you would know if you were watching New Japan because this is actually New Japan!). Vice takes over without much effort but there are the superkicks. Marty adds one from the apron and busts out the umbrella, allowing the Bucks to dive onto the Briscoes.

Ospreay kicks Scurll to the floor and there's the BIG springboard shooting star to take out the pile. Back in and Scurll breaks Mark's finger but the wild dancing and shouting CHICKENWING somehow tips Mark off about what to expect. Now it's Romero coming in to clean house...until a superkick cuts him off. In case that's not enough for you, Jay gets in a little comeback and eats a superkick as well.

Ospreay grabs a C4 on Scurll and it's back to Romero for the clotheslines in the corner. The clotheslines have no effect on Fale (duh) and he keeps walking forward despite Ospreay hitting clothesline after clothesline for a cool visual. Fale shrugs it off and Razors Edges Romero onto the pile, though it knocks out some partners as well. The Briscoes drop Fale but it's the Bucks coming right back in to take over. The Meltzer driver is broken up and Romero rolls Matt up for the pin at 9:25.

Rating: B. Not the highest quality match but it was entertaining and fast paced, making it the perfect choice for an opener. This also helps set up Vice vs. Bucks for the Junior Heavyweight Tag Team Titles tomorrow night, which is almost always a good idea. I'm still not sure why Chaos and the Club are feuding but they've long since reached the point where they just are feuding so it's kind of hard to really complain anymore.

Los Ingobernables de Japon vs. Titan/Dragon Lee/Volador Jr./Jushin Thunder Liger

That would be Sanada/Bushi/Evil/Hiromu Takahashi, the first three of whom

are the Never Openweight Six Man Tag Team Champions. The first three of their opponents are all from CMLL. If nothing else it's cool to hear Liger's music on TV. Finally, Titan is pronounced Tee-Tan as something that is likely lost in translation. Volador headscissors Bushi to the floor to start and it's off to Liger for a very nice reception.

Sanada comes in as well as we hear about JR seeing Liger facing Brian Pillman back in 1992. That's when Liger had been around NINE YEARS already, meaning he's now a thirty three year veteran. I really don't know what to say to that but it's rather impressive. Los Ingobernables sneak in from behind and clean house, knocking all of the villains to the floor. Sanada ties Titan up (ala Jack Gallagher) and hits a running dropkick, which isn't treated like a comedy spot as it would be over here.

Liger gets in a palm strike and makes the tag to Lee for a BIG chop off with Takahashi. The CMLL team hits double flip dives, leaving Lee to kick Takahashi in the face. Titan hand walks away and spins into a headscissors, only making himself dizzy in the process. That's some awful luck, or mal suerte to him. Titan gets triple dropkicked for two and Takahashi grabs the referee, allowing Evil to chair Titan down. The Time Bomb is good for the pin on Titan at 6:47.

Rating: D+. Nowhere near as good as the previous match here but the time didn't help things. This is another good example of a match that was helped by commentary as they were explaining why these factions were feuding, which mainly took place in Mexico. I don't need anything detailed as just telling me they've fought before and it was here or there helps quite a bit. The action was fun and while I didn't know some of the guys, it was entertaining enough.

IWGP United States Title Tournament First Round: Jay Lethal vs. Hangman Page

The belt is big and rather ugly. Lethal has bad ribs coming in thanks to Silas Young and Beer City Bruiser. Page jumps him at the bell but Lethal is right back up with a suicide dive (not "drive" Josh). They head inside with Lethal missing a moonsault and getting kicked in the bad ribs. Well

at least Page isn't doing anything stupid. As I say that, he hits a shooting star shoulder off the apron in what is the best example of an unnecessary flip I've seen in a good while.

Back in and Lethal kicks him in the ribs but it's WAY too early for the Lethal Injection. Instead it's something like an Octopus Hold until Lethal escapes for some kicks to the head. Jay hits his top rope elbow but hurts the ribs again, allowing Page to get up at two. The front flip clothesline gives Page two but he gets caught in the Lethal Combination. The Lethal Injection almost completely misses though and both guys are down. I'm not sure why Page is but that's not the biggest deal. Lethal kicks him in the head again and NOW the Injection connects full on for the pin at 8:24.

Rating: C-. This felt really off and almost like a highlight reel or clipped version of a much longer match. Lethal and Page are two of the ROH guys I like more than usual and you would expect better chemistry between them. Maybe it's the injured ribs but I'm not sure if that's enough to excuse the blown spots and general lack of flow to the match. They just weren't on the same page and it felt like they were wrestling two very different matches.

IWGP United States Title Tournament First Round: Zack Sabre Jr. vs. Juice Robinson

JR thinks Sabre is Ospreay. Eh I've gotten them confused before too. The fans are already singing for Sabre, making me think they're all evil foreigners. Well maybe save for those chanting for Juice. After a brief feeling out process to start, Sabre wastes no time in going after the arm with a variety of holds that I can't even begin to name.

Robinson escapes the third straight hold (all of which looked like they should have broken the arm), eventually getting Zack up in a fireman's carry for a gutbuster. Zack rolls him up for two and it's time to kick at the arm a few more times. Robinson tells him to bring it on so Zack kicks away.

Something like a triangle choke has Robinson in more trouble but he powerbombs his way to freedom (AMERICAN freedom that is). Back up and

Robinson tries an Unprettier but gets reversed into an Octopus Hold with the arm being cranked at a CRAZY angle. The other arm is pulled back as well until it's a full nelson with Zack's leg between Robinson's arms (I told you his holds were hard to call) for the tap at 10:06.

Rating: C+. Sabre is an interesting guy as he's the best technician I've seen since Daniel Bryan (if not before) and that makes for some very fun matches. That being said, he's also so dominant that it's hard to imagine him losing, which makes things a bit worse. Now that being said, if there's ever a time for him to lose, it's in a tournament. Robinson continues to show WAY more upside than he did in NXT so maybe it just wasn't a good fit down there. I've liked enough of what I've seen from him so far outside of Orlando so there seems to be potential there.

David Finlay/Jay White/Kushida/Hiroshi Tanahashi vs. Sho Tanaka/Yohei Komatsu/Yoshi Hashi/Billy Gunn

Yes THAT Billy Gunn and yes he's challenging THAT Hiroshi Tanahashi for the Intercontinental Title. Kushida gets quite the reception and it's time for the eight way staredown to start. Yohei and Kushida start things off with Kushida easily taking him down and offering a SUCK IT to Gunn. Finlay comes in to dropkick Tanaka but the ring is quickly cleared, leaving Sho to dropkick Kushida in the back.

Sho grabs a bodyscissors before it's off to Gunn for one of the louder reactions of the night. A quick crotch chop sets up a staredown with Tanahashi before it's back to Sho to do the majority of the work. Kushida fights them off because the Tempura Boyz Tanaka and Komatsu don't seem all that great. Tanahashi comes in off the hot tag and forearms Gunn down with his bad arm.

Gunn completely fails to catch him off a crossbody throws in a SUCK IT, and goes down off his half of a double clothesline. White comes in to grab a suplex on Tatsu but gets caught with a spinwheel kick. A suplex into the corner drops Tatsu and everything breaks down. Tanahashi hits the Sling Blade on Gunn and it's White left in the ring for a Flatliner to put Tatsu away at 9:43.

Rating: D. This match has the one obvious question: why in the name of

tree bark is Gunn getting the title shot? Star power? That's not exactly something this show is lacking and I have a really hard time believing that New Japan would have issues getting someone better in the ring and with more star power than Gunn to challenge Tanahashi. Throw Gunn into the tournament and let one of the people from there (Page maybe) have the shot instead. It really doesn't look good otherwise and the match could be a major mess, especially when you consider what Tanahashi is capable of.

A long celebration takes us to intermission, which features a look at the main event, a look at the Tag Team Title match and a recap of the night's matches so far. This runs just under twenty minutes.

Tag Team Titles: War Machine vs. Guerillas of Destiny

War Machine is challenging in a rematch from Dominion where they lost the belts. JR says War Machine are SEVEN TIME ROH Tag Team Champions, which makes me think one of two things: JR is drunk or he looked at their Wikipedia page, saw that they had seven successful title defenses in their ONE reign with the titles, and didn't bother checking what he was reading.

Before the match, Ray Rowe wants to make it a No DQ match and it's immediately on. The four of them head outside without wasting a second with the champs getting more fired up every time they take a shot to the face. JR goes into a weird rambling speech about having nothing to say, followed by Barnett taking over with play by play. Did he drop his notes there or something? A trashcan shot stops Rowe's suicide dive and the champs work him over in the ring.

Rowe takes a neckbreaker and splash for two but Hanson remembers that he's in the match and makes the save. About fifteen straight running clotheslines in the corner crush the champs again, prompting JR to talk about... Hanson's beard? The Bronco Buster misses though and it's time for the big slugout with War Machine throwing Tama around until Loa powerslams Hanson out of the air. A Swan Dive into a frog splash gets two on Rowe but Hanson is back in.

Fallout is loaded up but here's fellow Bullet Club member Chase Owens to

take out Hanson with a chair. JR sounds rather annoyed about the lack of disqualifications, which isn't exactly like him. Rowe gets powerbombed through two chairs (Can Hanson just not take a big bump tonight?) but Hanson is here to save Rowe from going through a table. Fallout through the table ends Loa to give us new champions at 11:07.

Rating: B-. Sometimes you need four strong guys to beat the heck out of each other for a little over ten minutes. War Machine is a fun team and the Guerillas are the kind of team who can be right back due to pure charisma. A good power brawl is hard to come by and I had fun watching them beating on each other. Entertaining match and a nice change of pace to a lot of the other stuff on here.

IWGP United States Title Tournament First Round: Tetsuya Naito vs. Tomohiro Ishii

Naito jumps him from behind during the entrances, setting up the charge into the pose on the mat for a VERY strong reaction. After we hit the stall button to start, Ishii hammers Naito like he stole something, including the loud chops. Naito thinks it's a good idea to chop a guy named the Stone Pitbull (who I didn't realize was shorter than Naito), earning himself another beating.

Back up and Naito tries again for the same result. Must be a Ric Flair fan. A hiptoss and running dropkick to the back of the head work a bit better and it's time to pose. Ishii suplexes him down and blasts Naito with a suplex. A powerslam nearly drops Naito on his head for two but he pops right back up with a missile dropkick for a breather.

Ishii's suplex is countered into a DDT (always liked that counter) and a top rope hurricanrana gets two. Naito walks around for a good while...and then spits at Ishii. I get that he's confident but sweet goodness that seems unwise. One heck of a headbutt drops Naito and a powerbomb cuts him in half.

A hard clothesline gives Ishii two more but his brainbuster is countered, eventually into a tornado DDT. Destino is broken up so Naito kicks him in the head again, only to get caught by the sliding lariat. A dragon suplex gives Naito two but it's a clothesline into the brainbuster to advance

Ishii at 15:53.

Rating: B. They had a good story here with Naito being able to hang with Ishii on his own but getting too cocky and showing the lack of respect that a monster like Ishii deserved. It's a good way to make Ishii a big deal as pinning a former World Champion always will be. I liked this a lot more than the other Ishii matches I've seen so it was a nice surprise, though I tend to like Naito matches.

IWGP United States Title Tournament First Round: Michael Elgin vs. Kenny Omega

Omega has the Bucks with him as usual and is playing the full on face here despite still being a heel (officially). They try to get the referee to do Too Sweet but he offers a crotch chop instead. Elgin powers him (Omega, not the referee) into the corner to start before some forearms and kicks earn Kenny a wave of the finger. Kenny still can't do anything with the monster so Elgin chops him for a change.

The delayed vertical suplex has Kenny reeling but an Elite chant brings him back so he can do the Rise of the Terminator deal (still don't get it and don't really care to know). Back in and one heck of a top rope shoulder sends Omega flying across the ring and out to the floor. Omega hits a moonsault from the apron...and Elgin casually catches him because he can.

Kenny slams him onto the apron for a nineteen count and we hit the chinlock to slow things down a bit. Elgin raises his knees to block a middle rope moonsault as JR calls the Bucks very annoying. That might be the understatement of the year. A powerslam pulls Kenny out of the air for a close two (ignore the spitting onto the mat during the cover). Elgin powers him up again but gets caught in a snap dragon suplex to send him outside.

That means a big flip dive followed by a jumping knee to Elgin's face, only to have one heck of a clothesline take Omega's head off. They fight to the apron for a hard German suplex to drop Elgin on his head for a scary looking crash. Back in and a super crucifix bomb gives Elgin two more, prompting JR to ask the obvious: if that doesn't work, what will?

Well nothing more than likely, but you have to be used to some big (and arguably ridiculous) kickouts around here. Three straight jumping knees to the head knock Elgin silly and a package Tombstone gets two. There's another running knee and the One Winged Angel sends Omega on at 22:36.

Rating: A-. I liked this a bit more than a lot of the Omega matches I've seen, mainly because it wasn't far longer than it really needed to be (and it won't be called 25% better than the best matches of all time). They had another good story here with Elgin using pure power while Omega was more well rounded and therefore capable of adapting to counter whatever Elgin threw at him. Omega is very good and it's fun watching him, face/heel issues aside (which is more a company/stable thing than anything else).

Here are tomorrow's final four:

Jay Lethal

Kenny Omega

Tomohiro Ishii

Zack Sabre Jr.

We recap Cody vs. Kazuchika Okada. It's a short story with Cody challenging Okada for the title right after Okada's draw against Omega at Dominion. Okada went with it because...well that's what wrestlers do.

IWGP World Title: Kazuchika Okada vs. Cody

Cody is challenging and comes out with a bunch of people in ex-President masks. Brandi Rhodes is with him (still absolutely stunning) in an American flag outfit and lights a cigar for him. After a kiss from Brandi (with his right shoulder taped up), we're ready to go with a slow start, which means this is likely going long. Okada takes him to the mat and then to the ropes where he gives Cody a friendly pat on the chest.

That warrants a break for another kiss, followed by heading back inside for a standoff. They head outside to speed things up with Okada hitting a running dive over the barricade, only to have Cody go after the knee to

take over. Cody chokes with his boot but Okada neckbreakers his way out.

Back up and a fast running elbow to the jaw followed by a DDT lets Okada nip up. The signature dropkick knocks Cody off the top and out to the floor in a heap. A DDT on the floor makes things even worse but Okada can't follow up, meaning it's a long count. Back in and Cody runs the corner for a super armdrag (looked like a C4 2000 at first) but the Disaster Kick is countered into a flapjack (cool).

There's the top rope elbow, only to have Cody grab the Trailer Hitch to go back to the knee. The hold is broken and a slap fires Okada up all over again, prompting a mudhole stomping in the corner. The jumping Tombstone and a pair of Rainmakers drop Cody. Cue Omega with a towel like Cody was teasing at Dominion but Brandi says no.

This brings out the Bucks to ask what Omega is doing and Okada nails another dropkick. Naturally Cody hits a Rainmaker of his own for two, followed by Okada grabbing his own Cross Rhodes. So now that we're back to even with the stolen finishers, Cody gets two more off an inverted DDT. To really mess with his boss, Cody loads up the One Winged Angel, which is quickly reversed into a German suplex. The jumping Tombstone (yes another one) sets up the Rainmaker to retain the title at 27:12.

Rating: B+. I liked the Omega match a bit more but Cody is a bit more of a generic style than Elgin being awesome with the power. Okada is still very smooth in the ring, though I do think he uses his big moves a bit too often. That being said, it was an excellent match with both guys hitting their big spots. Omega vs. Cody could be interesting, assuming it's not just a swerve for later. Very good main event, even though I didn't quite buy Cody as the biggest threat to the title.

Post match Okada poses but Omega gets in too. He won't take the night from Okada, even though he wanted to main event this show. They'll meet again in the G1 and tonight is Okada's. Gedo and Okada both say they're awesome and Okada will make it rain strong style around the world.

At the post show press conference...I have no idea as I don't speak Japanese.

A highlight reel ends the show.

Overall Rating: A-. This was a very good show and that's the best thing that could have happened. It's not a masterpiece or a classic but for what was basically a pay per view in front of a small crowd, it worked as well as it could have. They showcased most of their stars and the two major matches were both outstanding. Couple that with this airing at 8pm EST and on free TV, it's hard to find anything major to complain about. Maybe a little bit could have been cut (as in like 10-15 minutes, or the Tanahashi eight man tag) but the time really wasn't a problem.

The one thing that needs to be remembered though is this is one match. Based on this, New Japan isn't going to overtake WWE or become the hottest thing in American wrestling. It's a very good night but they need to do it again (as in beyond night two) for it to mean much. It's a very good show though and they're off to a great start in America. Now build on that and keep it at (or really near for that matter) this level and we'll see where things go. Strong debut though.

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Ring of Honor TV – July 6, 2016: Enough

Ring of Honor

Date: July 6, 2016|

Host: Kevin Kelly

We're at a special show this week with the 250th episode, which is going to showcase the best of 2016 so far. This could mean several things, though I have a feeling we'll be seeing a lot of the New Japan wrestlers who have basically dominated the year so far. Unfortunately that means even more time away from the new stuff ROH is doing but that's a common problem for the promotion. Let's get to it.

TV Title: Tomohiro Ishii vs. Bobby Fish

From Global Wars with Ishii defending after taking the title from Roderick Strong, the champion that Fish had been chasing. Fish actually runs the much bigger Ishii over to start but Ishii does the same to send Fish outside for a bit of his time. Back in and Fish fires off some kicks to put Ishii in trouble, which isn't something you see happen to him that often. Ishii wins another slugout though and a headbutt puts Fish down with ease.

Fish makes the mistake of headbutting Ishii and the referee has to check on him as a result. The champ gets knocked off the top but Fish misses a flying headbutt, only to start back in with kicks to the knee. We take a break and come back with Fish hitting an exploder suplex for two but getting headbutted for his efforts. Ishii gets his own near fall with a delayed vertical superplex, followed by a Saito Suplex.

Fish looks mostly dead so Ishii powerbombs him for two more but Bobby grabs a sleeper. I could go for a small vs. big match without the smaller guy jumping on his back with a sleeper. It's just so overdone. Ishii, seemingly annoyed with how lame Fish's strategy was, German suplexes him down.

They head to the apron with Fish back on his feet and slugging it out. As expected, Ishii easily knocks him down but Fish kicks the leg out to put both guys down on the floor. Back in and a hard lariat gets two for the champ but Fish goes back to the sleeper. He fires off some elbows to the head and survives a flip attempt to actually knock Ishii out at 15:30 (original time).

Rating: B. The match was a good, hard hitting brawl but Ishii is the definition of a guy that had no business winning the title or being involved in this story whatsoever. Strong vs. Fish had been a well built up story but instead of getting the payoff we had been set up for, Ishii got the belt despite having no connection to either of them. That's becoming too common of a tradition and it's getting old in a hurry. This match was good but Fish vs. Strong would have been as well and had a strong story to go with it. Which sounds better?

Briscoe Brothers vs. Hiroshi Tanahashi/Michael Elgin

From the 14th Anniversary Show and no real story here other than ROH vs. New Japan in a "dream" match. Jay and Michael get things going with Jay kicking him in the face but getting gorilla pressed to put him right back down. We get the very cool delayed vertical suplex with Mark's interference not doing a thing to stop Elgin. That's such insane power.

It's off to Mark vs. Tanahashi for the air guitar vs. Redneck Kung Fu battle which results in Tanahashi grabbing an armbar. Naturally that means it's time to talk about Hiroshi's hair but Jay is tagged in, only to stay on the floor while Mark hits a Blockbuster off the apron to take Elgin out. We get the big showdown (which isn't treated as big or a showdown) with Jay getting two off an elbow to Tanahashi's jaw. Mr. Wrestling 3 finally realizes what we saw there but it's already off to Mark for a Russian legsweep.

The fans chant for Elgin but get a commercial instead. Back with the tag bringing in Elgin for some running strikes to Mark's chest. Jay has to save his brother from Rolling Germans as everything breaks down. A back elbow/German suplex combo sends Mark flying but Jay breaks up the High Fly Flow.

Mark shouts a lot and flips Mike off the top for two. With Tanahashi down on the floor, the brothers take turns with headbutts until Mark is backdropped over the top. Elgin no sells a boot to the face (he's from New Japan remember) and clotheslines Jay down for a breather. The hot tag brings in Tanahashi for some dragon screw leg whips but he walks into a neckbreaker.

Froggy Bow gets two before Elgin breaks up the Doomsday Device. In a cool move, Elgin gives Tanahashi a reverse Alabama Slam onto Mark for two more with Jay making the save. Jay is dispatched so it's a powerbomb into the High Fly Flow for the pin on Mark at 14:50 (original match time).

Rating: C+. The match was fine though I'm rarely a fan of these matches where the only story is one great team against two guys who might team together for a few months. Oh and of course the New Japan team goes over clean. Heaven forbid Tanahashi isn't treated as the biggest star in the history of ever over here.

Clips from the Fight Without Honor to blow off Silas Young vs. Dalton Castle. We see less than a minute of the match which ran over sixteen minutes. To recap: we can see a full TV Title match where a New Japan guy took a spot from an ROH guy for no reason other than "we need ROH vs. New Japan" and then we can see a full meaningless "dream" match where the freshly created New Japan team defeated the undisputed best team in ROH history. The blowoff match to a year long ROH only feud can't even get a minute of TV time though. I've said it many times now but this isn't an ROH show. This is New Japan TV: America.

ReDRagon vs. The Kingdom vs. Young Bucks

From ROH TV on January 20. It's Cole/Bennett for the Kingdom here and this is a street fight. The Bucks jump O'Reilly and Fish during the entrances and we're starting fast. The injured Taven gets a double superkick, as does ring announcers Bobby Cruz. ReDRagon gets back in to work on the Bucks, only to have the Kingdom come in again to turn this into a wild brawl that is going to be almost impossible to keep track of.

Bennett punches Fish down and it's Cole setting Matt in a chair in the middle of the ring. A running charge sets up a chinlock and even Kelly

has to acknowledge that it's a spot they've seen before. Kyle backdrops Nick on the floor for a thud before diving into a superkick. We take a break and come back with Cole in a shopping cart and being wheeled into a superkick.

The Bucks set up a table at ringside but it's ReDRagon double teaming Matt inside. The Kingdom brings in a ladder (Mr. Wrestling III: "It's amazing what you can find in south Philadelphia") to take out ReDRagon and it's Cole putting the ladder around his neck. That only allows ReDRagon to blast the ladder with chairs before setting the ladder on top of those chairs.

Bennett comes back in to spinebuster Kyle onto the steel but the Bucks powerbomb him (Bennett) through the ladder. A Swanton onto the ladder sets up More Bang For Your Buck but Cole pulls the referee out at two. Kevin Kelly accidentally eats a superkick and Mr. Wrestling III freaks out while still shouting SUPERKICK in a funny moment.

We take another break and come back with Cole hitting the Canadian Destroyer on Matt but walking into a superkick from Nick. Bennett takes Chasing the Dragon on the floor, leaving O'Reilly and Cole to fight in the aisle. That leaves Fish alone against the Bucks but he stops to spear Bennett through a table on the floor. A double superkick off the apron gives Fish the weakest table bump in history with Nick having to splash him the rest of the way through.

Back in and the Bucks put a party hat on Bennett for a superkick party, only to have Maria hit them both low for a save. This brings out AJ Styles to hit Bennett in the ribs with a chair before laying him out with Bloody Sunday. Maria gets a Meltzer Driver and the Indytaker into the Styles Clash puts Bennett away at 16:45.

Rating: B. Totally wild brawl here and a lot of fun at the same time. This wasn't about anything more than carnage and that's all they delivered the entire time. The piledriver to Maria was a good way to write her off TV and the Kingdom goes out in a great performance, especially considering it wasn't their usual combination.

Overall Rating: F. The wrestling wasn't the problem here (obviously). The

problem is the same thing I covered earlier: this isn't about Ring of Honor anymore. I know the next set of TV tapings doesn't feature the New Japan wrestlers but look at what they consider the best of the first half of 2016: New Japan wrestler, New Japan wrestlers, one minute of ROH only and the New Japan stable.

Also this was somehow their usage of the 250th episode. No mention of the history of the show, no classic matches (or even match), nothing but "Hey here's a bunch of New Japan stuff in case you haven't seen enough of it yet." ROH should be better than this by now and it's not like they can't stand on their own feet without New Japan.

I really can't imagine their ratings go up that high when they're there, especially when they're around that often. It's not even a novelty anymore as they're around so much that we just had a highlight show featuring them in every match. Having them around every once in awhile for a set of tapings here and there is fine as they're certainly an attraction but this is WAY too far and has been for a long time.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book on NXT: The Full Sail Years Volume II at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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Ring of Honor TV – June 22, 2016: Go Home New Japan

Ring of Honor

Date: June 22, 2016

Location: Ted Reeve Arena, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Commentators: Nigel McGuinness, Kevin Kelly

It's the go home show for Best in the World and my guess is that means it's time to talk about the Bullet Club instead of anything related to the upcoming pay per view. I mean, I really don't think that the last several months focusing on New Japan has been fair to them so we better dedicate another hour to them. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Dalton Castle vs. Gedo

The announcers use the entrances to run down Friday's pay per view card. Feeling out process to start with Silas spinning out of an Irish whip, meaning it's time for Young to bend back in a manner that freaks Gedo out in a funny bit. Gedo is sent outside where the Boys fan him down, earning themselves a poke to the eyes. We take a break and come back with Gedo hammering away but running into a forearm to the face. A facebuster has Castle in trouble but the Boys offer a distraction, allowing Castle to hit the Bang A Rang for the pin at 10:55.

Rating: C-. Believe it or not this actually has some meaning as Castle is challenging for the TV Title at the pay per view. I mean it's not like they actually build the thing up or anything like that, but why build it up when you can remind us that Gedo is part of the Chaos stable, which means a grand total of nothing over here?

We recap BJ Whitmer vs. Steve Corino, or at least the most recent aspects of it. They bring up the idea of Corino being run out of the promotion but Mr. Wrestling III appearing in his place. Whitmer then drew Corino back by stalking Corino's family (shown here for the first time) to

finally set up the Fight Without Honor on Friday.

Adam Cole doesn't care who wins on Friday because he's going to be the next champ.

We look at Jay Lethal becoming undisputed champion at last year's Best in the World, followed by Jay Briscoe having Jay Lethal pinned at a show back in April.

Will Ferrara vs. Tomohiro Ishii

They slug it out to start with Ferrara not getting very far on the bigger Ishii. A shoulder actually staggers Ishii and a dropkick puts him down. A neckbreaker gets two for Ferrara but Ishii slams him down for some two counts of his own. Ferrara comes right back with a running elbow in the corner and a Samoan drop for two. Will goes one step too far though as he tries a suplex, earning himself a beating in the corner. A running clothesline gets two for Ishii so Ferrara slaps him in the face. That means the brainbuster puts Will away at 4:06.

Rating: C. Not a bad power match here, especially when you keep in mind how small Ferrara is. Unfortunately it doesn't mean anything other than a way to make Ishii look good, because that's what the world was waiting for. I know I keep harping on this but there's a pay per view in two days and we're spending TV time on a nothing match that advances no story. That's just bad planning and focusing on the wrong issues.

The Briscoes are ready for the main event.

Here's Steve Corino for some thoughts on his Fight Without Honor against BJ Whitmer. Corino is an evil man and it sounds as sweet as a slogan on a t-shirt. Years ago he took barbed wire to Terry Funk's flesh and convinced people to turn on their best friends but it was always about him. A few years ago he fell in love with a woman and tried to change himself but it's just his nature to be evil.

Whitmer has accused him of wearing a mask and BJ was right. However, the mask was this suit, these glasses and under this dyed hair because it made people believe he was who people wanted him to be. At the end of the

day, he's an evil man and BJ Whitmer will be out of Ring of Honor after Best in the World because Corino is taking the trash out.

Jay Lethal likes the idea of facing the Bullet Club on equal footing because something they never try.

Roderick Strong is ready to stand up for Ring of Honor against the Bullet Club.

Bullet Club vs. Briscoe Brothers/Roderick Strong/Jay Lethal

It's Kenny Omega/Guerillas of Destiny/Matt Jackson for the Club in a somewhat weird combination. Matt and Mark start things off with Matt sliding under the crazy man but getting stopped by the threat of redneck kung fu, which earns him a jumping kick to the face. Strong comes in and knocks Matt down with an elbow to the face, meaning it's off to Lethal vs. Omega for a BIG reaction from the crowd.

That goes nowhere though as Omega tags in Tonga Loa, who gets in a shot from behind to take over on Lethal. Now of course Omega is willing to come in and stomp away in the corner, only to have Mark take him into the ROH corner for a beatdown. Everything breaks down for a bit (of course) and it's time for the multiple dives but Omega pulls Lethal to the floor and sends him into the barricade. Strong kicks Omega in the face though and we take a break.

Back with Omega trying to fight out of the corner but getting planted ribs first onto the mat. The tag brings Matt in anyway and it's time for the superkicks because those are so hard to predict. The fifth superkick puts Roderick down for two and it's off to Tama Tonga vs. Mark. Tonga's suplex doesn't work and it's time for more kung fu. A Roll of the Dice drops Mark and it's another double tag to bring in Lethal and Omega for a slugout.

The Lethal Injection is countered but Matt starts superkicking his partners by mistake. The One Winged Angel and Lethal Combination are both countered so it's Jay Briscoe vs. whoever he can punch at the moment. Everything breaks down and the double superkick hits Lethal but the second attempt is broken up. The Jay Driller plants Loa for the pin at

15:12.

Rating: C+. It was nice to have them get together before their matches on Friday but as usual the Bullet Club had to be involved as well. Unfortunately that dominated the match and the pay per view matches weren't exactly touched on because there was no time for something silly like that.

Dalton Castle and Bobby Fish trade promos about Castle earning his title shot but that not being enough to make him the champion.

Roderick Strong says Mark Briscoe may have been around here longer but he's still going to be second best.

The Addiction is ready to prove that they're the best in the world and not just the best in the busi-a-ness.

Both Jay's are ready to go and prove that they're the best in the world. Briscoe hopes Lethal has enjoyed all the good food he's eaten in the last year because after Best in the World it's back to Ramen noodles. This was really good, especially with the editing going back and forth like it did.

Overall Rating: C-. This was a watchable show on its own but a pretty lame go home show for a pay per view. That last little bit helped but a lot of it felt like they had forgotten they needed to plug this show. Hopefully the New Japan people are gone for a long while after this because they're really dragging things down. It's one thing to have the Bullet Club around but the people like Ishii, Gedo and Kushida are just taking up TV time from the ROH regulars and that's not a good thing.

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Ring of Honor TV – March 23, 2016: Can I Sign Up For Old Japan?

Ring of Honor

Date: March 23, 2015

Location: Sam's Town Hotel and Gambling Hall, Las Vegas, Nevada

Commentators: Mr. Wrestling III, Kevin Kelly

It's a special show this time as we have a new taping cycle including the New Japan crew. These things can go a bunch of different ways and unfortunately a lot of those ways don't often go well for the normal Ring of Honor guys. It's also the fight show after the 14th Anniversary Show so things can start moving forward. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

TV Title: BJ Whitmer vs. Tomohiro Ishii

Ishii is defending after taking the title in Japan because WE MUST PRAISE NEW JAPAN. The graphic says "Tomorhiro" but I can't find anything else that spells is that way. We're not quite ready to go yet though as Veda Scott and Cedric Alexander come out with Veda offering a check in exchange for the title shot. Whitmer is appalled at the suggestion that he could be bought off and then takes the check anyway.

TV Title: Cedric Alexander vs. Tomohiro Ishii

The match starts after a break with Ishii hitting a hard shoulder and throwing Alexander across the ring with ease. Ishii headbutts him down but Veda grabs the boot to finally give Cedric an opening. See, she's

effective as well as gorgeous. Cedric starts stomping at the head before going with a far less painful chinlock.

That's enough for the champ though as he Hulks Up and scores with chops and a suplex. Cedric is up at two and climbs the corner for a spinning kick to the head. Back up and Ishii just headbutts the heck out of him, only to have the sliding lariat get countered into a crucifix for two. Ishii is done playing though and he brainbusts Alexander for the pin to retain at 6:32.

Rating: C. I'm really not a fan of the NEVER stuff that Ishii does over in New Japan but he's perfectly acceptable when he's doing more wrestling than all that strong style toughman nonsense. Alexander is way too generic for my tastes but at least Veda is awesome in her role and can carry anyone however far she needs to.

Here's the Addiction to complain about the reunion of the Motor City Machine Guns. Oh great that's a thing again. They take credit for bringing Chris Sabin back from the depths (I'd have cheered if they added "of TNA") and now they've been betrayed for a Machine Guns reunion. Kazarian gets in a few shots at Las Vegas being the land of bad decisions and thinks this was all one bad choice. Daniels thinks the fans are all thinking it's Christmas morning to see Sabin/Shelley back together again but it's time for an apology.

Cue the Guns, unfortunately without their rocking TNA theme. Before they get going, how in the world is Sabin the only former World Champion out of this group? Sabin has reached the conclusion that the Addiction are just delusional jerks. The brawl is teased but of course the Addiction bails. Daniels says they'll have a match but it's up to them, the adults, to decide when that happens.

Jay Lethal is ready to defend against Hirooki Goto next week.

Reno Scum vs. Briscoes

Scum (Luster the Legend/Adam Thorestowe) is a team who has been around before but aren't that well known. Adam and Mark get things going with the former getting double teamed in a somewhat heelish attack by the

Briscoes. Back in and Adam can't get anywhere with Mark so it's off to Luster for a running shoulder in the corner. Mark gets pounded down but finally comes back with some right hands to both Scum.

It's still not enough though as a catapult sends Mark into a Death Valley Driver for two. Not that it matters as Mark flips onto his feet and makes the tag off to Jay as house is cleaned. Everything breaks down and a powerbomb into a neckbreaker gets two on Luster. A German suplex followed by a double stomp gets the same on Mark, only to have him pop up with a Death Valley Driver. The Froggy Bow is enough to put Adam away at 6:55.

Rating: C-. Scum didn't do anything for me here and I'm really not sure who is supposed to benefit here. The Briscoes were fine enough but this had that Ring of Honor style to it that doesn't get me interested. There are more than enough teams in Ring of Honor already and Scum really wasn't needed here.

Dalton Castle is excited for his Fight Without Honor with Silas Young in three weeks but the Boys aren't old enough to know what he has planned.

Young Bucks vs. Hiroshi Tanahashi/Michael Elgin

The fans are far more behind Tanahashi than the Bucks here, which is a nice sign for the future of wrestling. Elgin and Nick start with Michael actually trying a test of strength. Now since no power guy has ever gotten a small heel to try a test of strength, I'll let you guess how this goes. The Bucks start speeding things up and a pair of dropkicks have the good guys (I think?) on the floor.

Matt dives over the top to take Tanahashi out and we take a break. Back with Elgin bicycle kicking Matt out to the floor before giving him a double suplex. Elgin and Tanahashi give Nick a double SUCK IT in a nice visual. There's a delayed vertical suplex with Nick trying a save, only to have Elgin suplex both of them at the same time. Tanahashi grabs an abdominal stretch and uses Matt's ribs as an air guitar. Eh that was amusing.

We hit the chinlock for a bit until Nick pulls Elgin to the floor for our first superkick. Nick gets in a regular SUCK IT and there's the slingshot

X Factor. We take a break and come back with the Bucks still in control and getting cheered way too loudly. Tanahashi gets in a cross body though and the tag brings Elgin back in. Big Mike picks up the Bucks for a Samoan drop/fall away slam at the same time because he's got freaking strength. The Falcon Arrow gets two on Matt but double superkicks set up a double 450 for two on Elgin.

Tanahashi no sells ANOTHER superkick and gets loaded up into kind of a reverse Alabama Slam from Elgin to send him onto...Matt's knees. Now you might think we just had enough double superkicks for a lifetime, but that's not how the Bucks roll. FIVE more superkicks have them in control but the Meltzer Driver is countered with Elgin's powerbomb. The Sling Blade and another powerbomb sets up the High Fly Flow to give Tanahashi the pin at 16:10.

Rating: B. Better match here but I've made my opinions on the Bucks pretty clear over the last year. I still don't get why they're faces in this or any other promotion (well maybe PWG would make sense) but the fans go nuts over them and that's the point of bringing in acts like this. Tanahashi continues to be amazing (I'm a bit late on that one) and Elgin has that freakish strength that only a handful of people ever have, making this a rather fun match. Not exactly the kind of match I'd like as I'm not big on the styles of either promotion, but at least it was a fun performance.

Overall Rating: C+. This was good enough but the New Japan shows can get annoying in a hurry. At least we had a good match and the Fight Without Honor offers some promise, especially if it gives Castle the boost that he's been needing for months. Unfortunately I have a feeling we're in for A LOT more New Japan before we get there and that's not the most entertaining thing in the world.

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Wrestle Kingdom X: Gimme Back My Bullets

Wrestle Kingdom X

Date: January 4, 2016

Location: Tokyo Dome, Tokyo, Japan

Attendance: 25,204

Commentators: Kevin Kelly, Matt Striker, Yoshitatsu

This is one of those shows that I have to do almost every year as it's pretty much become a tradition. New Japan is pretty easily the second biggest wrestling promotion in the world and this is its annual Wrestlemania level show, always held on the same day of the year. The main event is Kazuchika Okada vs. Hiroshi Tanahashi for the IWGP World Title for the third time in four years, which is totally ok because it's Japan and therefore each of their matches MUST be five stars because it's a saga or something. Let's get to it.

On a side note: I barely keep up with New Japan and there is a very good chance that I'm not going to know a lot of the history, storylines or proper names for these things. I'm checking this out as a very rare viewer so hopefully the English commentary helps out a lot.

Pre-Show: New Japan Rumble

This is an eighteen man Royal Rumble style battle royal, with eliminations by pin or going over the top, made up of the people who

aren't on the show for whatever reason. I don't know most of the people in the match but I'll do what I can. Jushin Thunder Liger (last year's winner) and Yoshiaki Fujiwara (as in the man the man the armbars is named after, age 66) start things off. I believe we have ninety second intervals here though the English commentary doesn't kick in until the regular show.

Tiger Mask IV is in at #3 and takes his sweet time getting to the ring. Mask and Liger take Fujiwara down with a double leg lock but you don't try to put an old man in a submission hold, meaning it's Fujiwara putting them in a double hold instead. The times are getting weird here as the clocks are either at one hundred seconds or don't start until someone gets to the ring. Or it's a timed battle royal and it's just as close as they can get to set intervals. Anyway ROH's Cheeseburger is in at #4.

Everything stops for some reason with Liger and Tiger pulling Cheeseburger by an arm each. Fujiwara works Cheeseburger over in the corner as I guess this is some kind of initiation. That goes nowhere until it's Hiro Saito in at #5. Saito goes after Liger but has to fight with Tiger over a suplex. Mask takes him over and it's Yoshi-Hashi in at #6. Now it's starting to feel like a Royal Rumble with the ring filling up this quickly. The match stops again for a bit before everyone starts having random fights with each other.

Yoshi is taken to the mat for a backsplash from Saito and it's Mascara Dorado, who looks like a superhero, in at #7. There's almost nothing going on in between these entrances. Liger goes after Dorado, likely due to gimmick infringement, and puts on a seated abdominal stretch. Dorado counters into one of his own and it's Captain New Japan, an actual superhero character, in at #8.

Fujiwara quickly takes the Captain down for a very quick namesake armbars and our first elimination. Not that it matters though as most of the people in the ring cover Fujiwara to get rid of him a few seconds later. Manabu Nakanashi is in at #9 to get us to the halfway point with a grouping of Nakanashi, Dorado, Hashi, Saito, Cheeseburger, Tiger Mask and Liger. Yoshi goes up top to chop various people on the head until Liger wisely shakes the ropes to get him back down.

Yuji Nagata (a much bigger deal here than in his lame WCW run) is in at #10. Tiger saves Cheeseburger from Saito coming off the top, only to have Saito crush Tiger with a middle rope backsplash, leading to a group pin for the elimination. Satoshi Kojima is in at #11 as Saito and Liger are thrown out. Well at least they're not letting the ring get too full. Cheeseburger chops I believe Nakanashi for no effect until it's Hiroyoshi Tenzan in at #12. Nakanashi is put out off camera as the shot stays on the entrances the entire time.

Long time partners Tenzan and Kojima start working together on Hashi until we get some miscommunication, resulting in Kojima getting clotheslined down. Ryusuke Taguchi, a party guy that I've actually heard of, is in at #13. Taguchi is immediately stomped down by everyone left in the ring for no apparent reason. Shiro Koshinaka is in at #14 to give Taguchi a much needed break by cleaning house.

The ring is starting to get too full so here's the Bullet Club's King Haku (yes THAT King Haku) at #15, with the referee holding the ropes open for him. Well to be fair that's probably the best idea he could have had. Haku cleans house and easily puts out Nagata and Kojima. As the Great Kabuki (who was in the 1994 Royal Rumble and 67 years old) is in at #16, Dorado is put out off camera.

Kabuki's nunchucks entrance takes forever, allowing Haku to go from dominant to tapping out to Tenzan. The momentum is shortlived though as Tenzan is pinned ten seconds later. Cheeseburger hides from Kabuki and it's Kazushi Sakuraba, an MMA guy and seemingly big fan favorite, in at #17. We get an immediate showdown between Kabuki and Sakuraba to freak the announcers out all over again.

There's the mist to blind Sakuraba though, drawing a DQ. Sakuraba is pinned a few seconds later as Jado is in at #18, giving us a final field of Cheeseburger, Hashi, Taguchi, Koshinaka and Jado. By the time Jado gets to the ring, Hashi pins Cheeseburger with a swanton bomb, only to be pinned by Taguchi a few seconds later.

So we're down to three after Jado (and some pop singer he's with) take FOREVER to get to the ring. Jado is quickly double teamed with knees to

the head and a double hip attack for two but Taguchi breaks up a pin attempt after helping with the beatdown. Back up and Jado backdrops Koshinaka out before low bridging Taguchi to the floor for the win.

Rating: D. Well that happened. I know this was more like the Andre battle royal than anything else but the weird timing and taking forever to get on with each entrance really took away from a lot of what this had going for it. The ending was far too sudden too with Jado getting the big entrance and then winning in about two minutes. Too long for what they were going for here and I never got into it, especially when the regular show is over four hours long.

After the PA announcers says a lot of stuff I don't understand, Hiroshi Tanahashi (New Japan's John Cena) and I believe Togi Makabe appear on screen, dressed as cavemen. They introduce what I believe is a comedian, a child actress and some characters for a giant song and dance number. I have no idea what any of this means and I really don't want to know.

Ad for some anime movie.

The opening video talks about the company's 44th anniversary and shows the main names appearing on the show, thankfully in English. Each match is listed in the order it airs for a nice touch, meaning we get the entire card.

IWGP Junior Heavyweight Tag Team Titles: Young Bucks vs. ReDRagon vs. Aerial Dogfight vs. Roppongi Vice

ReDRagon is defending and Dogfight is Matt Sydal/Ricochet, known in Lucha Underground as Prince Puma. The Bucks are part of Bullet Club and have Cody Hall in their corner. Aside from about three months, the Bucks, ReDRagon and Vice have traded these titles since November 2013. In case you're not familiar with the teams, The Bucks are Nick/Matt Jackson, ReDRagon is Kyle O'Reilly/Bobby Fish and Vice is Baretta (or Trent Baretta) and Rocky Romero. This is one fall to a finish.

The Bullet Club clears the ring before the bell until it's Fish being thrown in for a double team from the Bucks. Kyle gets in a shot from the apron, allowing Fish to start in on Nick's arm. Nick tells them to suck

it (because DX used to do that) and tags in Sydal to miss an enziguri to Kyle. The tags start speeding up with both members of Vice sneaking in to double team Matt, including a double SUCK IT to the Bucks.

An enziguri drops Sydal as Yoshi talks about driving with Sydal and Baretta in WWE. The Bucks come in to start a Superkick Party and thank goodness Corino isn't on commentary. It's Baretta in trouble with Matt doing Chris Jericho's posing cover for two. Things slow down with Nick holding a front facelock and then a chinlock before it's back to Matt for a superkick to knock Rocky off the apron. A really quick tornado DDT drops Matt and the hot tag brings in Ricochet as everything breaks down.

Dogfight hits a quick moonsault/shooting star combination to Nick before the champs kick Matt in the chest. Nick dives on a bunch of guys and superkicks Kyle to break up a cross armbreaker over the ropes. Ricochet loads up a dive of his own but Cody (who looks EXACTLY like his dad) trips him up and Razor Edges him over the top onto the pile.

Back in and Ricochet gets caught in an elevated swanton bomb from the Bucks but Sydal breaks up More Bang For Your Buck. Dogfight starts taking over on the Bucks with Ricochet hitting an INSANE springboard shooting star to take out Cody at ringside. ReDRagon comes back in to break up stereo shooting stars from Sydal and Ricochet before taking their turns to beat up the Bucks. Cody pulls Fish to the floor for a save, only to be taken down by Kyle.

We get a pretty ridiculous quadruple suplex with Romero having to decide which half to help on. Romero starts running the corners for clotheslines to everyone he can find and a Shining Wizard from Sydal gets two.

Ricochet saves Sydal from something called Strong Zeo but the Bucks tag themselves in to steal two off the stereo shooting stars. A quick More Bang For Your Buck is enough to put Romero away and give the Bucks their fourth titles.

Rating: C. This was fun albeit a bit too long. I'm rarely a fan of these insane matches with little flow and nothing but spot sequence after spot sequence but this was entertaining enough. That being said, does it really matter if the Bucks win their fourth title in just over two years?

Based on how long three of these teams have dominated the division, some fresh blood would have been nice. Still though, fun choice for an opener.

NEVER Openweight Six Man Tag Team Titles: Briscoe Brothers/Toru Yano vs. Bullet Club

NEVER is kind of a hard concept to explain but basically it's for people who have never had a real chance to succeed. This is for the inaugural titles and the Bullet Club is represented by Bad Luck Fale (a monster)/Tama Tonga (Haku's adopted son)/Yujiro Takahashi (a New Japan traitor). The Briscoes are making their New Japan debut. Yujiro is accompanied by a good looking woman named Shiori. Yano is a comedy guy who keeps hyping some DVD of his.

The Briscoes clean house on Yujiro to start with Jay clotheslining him out to the floor. A Cactus Jack style elbow from Mark crushes Yujiro on the floor and the fans aren't sure what to make of the Brothers. Back in and it's Tonga taking Mark into the corner before it's off to Yano for a slap to Fale's neck. Tonga comes back in to scare Yano and it's time to beat on the comedy goof.

Yoshi doesn't like a Japanese man being in the otherwise foreign Bullet Club as Fale throws Yano down. All three Club members come in but Yano pulls off the turnbuckle pad (remember it's one pad over all three buckles in Japan) to send Fale crashing into the steel. Fale misses another charge into a different corner and the hot (minus the heat) tag brings in Mark. Some Redneck Kung Fu wakes the crowd up a bit but Yujiro takes Mark down with a fisherman's buster.

Jay comes in for a Death Valley Driver on Tonga but he can't hit the Jay Driller. Instead it's Tonga getting two off a running boot to the face for two on Jay. An Alabama Slam gets the same as the announcers put over the idea of Tama never winning a title in New Japan. Tama goes up top but gets caught in an electric chair, allowing Yano to blast him with a chair to knock him into a Doomsday Device from the Briscoes for the pin and the titles.

Rating: C-. I wasn't feeling this one though at least it was a unique ending. Unfortunately this match felt like something they added to the

show just so they could have another title match. That's rarely an idea that makes you think you need to see something and the fact that the Briscoes never wrestled in this company before does little to make me think I needed to see this match, especially on this show. Not bad, but nothing that really needed to exist.

Ring of Honor World Title: Jay Lethal vs. Michael Elgin

Elgin is challenging after having won a tournament called Survival of the Fittest. He's been on fire in Japan lately so Lethal, also making his debut in this company, is in trouble here. The champ also has Truth Martini in his corner. Elgin powers him into the corner to start as the announcers put over the basic story of power vs. speed. A big clothesline in the corner has Jay in trouble and there's a delayed vertical suplex with Jay not being able to knee his way out of it. That's insane strength.

There's a one armed press slam to make it even worse but Martini breaks up the powerbomb onto the apron. Michael is smart enough to stomp on the Book of Truth, only to get dropkicked right in the face for his efforts. A suicide dive puts Elgin into the barricade and Truth does an off camera Spinarooni. Nice job camera people. Back in and Lethal makes the mistake of chopping a power guy. Like, when has that EVER worked in history? Jay spins out of a hiptoss and dropkicks a seated Elgin for two.

We hit the reverse chinlock to kill some time until Elgin starts firing off some running forearm to the jaw, followed by a nice slingshot splash for no cover. The fans are finally starting to get into this after a just average match so far. In a cool visual, Elgin dead lifts Lethal up into the bridging German for two. The look on Lethal's face was perfect as he seemed terrified.

Jay comes right back with the Macho elbow for two but Elgin counters the Lethal Injection with another suplex. I'm not sure but it could have been due to Jay shouting LETHAL INJECTION. The apron suplex (think Cesaro) into a falcon arrow is only good for two (and to freak Yoshi out) but Elgin has to smack Martini. A shot to the head with the Book of Truth knocks Michael silly though and the Lethal Injection retains the title.

Rating: C+. Again this was fine but nothing you wouldn't see at any Ring of Honor house show. I'm kind of surprised they didn't change the title here for a big ROH moment on the biggest New Japan show but Elgin being awesome in Japan was only going to get them so far. Still though, not bad and the match did what it was supposed to do.

IWGP Junior Heavyweight Title: Kenny Omega vs. Kushida

Omega is defending and is part of the Bullet Club, meaning he has the Bucks with him. Kushida is part of the Timesplitters team and therefore has Taguchi (from the battle royal earlier) dressed as Doc Brown from....you know I really shouldn't have to tell you what Doc Brown is from. Omega gets a Terminator entrance so it's easily Kushida already out in front. These two have traded the title since last year's Wrestle Kingdom, making me think the junior heavyweights as a whole need an adjustment.

The Bucks jump Taguchi before the bell, only managing to tick Kushida off in the process. Omega spits on him and stomps away so Kushida dropkicks him in the face for his efforts. The champ bails to the floor and grabs some hairspray (so he's ripping off DJZ), only to have Kushida baseball slide him down. The referee is easily distracted of course though and Matt throws a trashcan at Kushida's head, allowing Omega to do a one man More Bang For Your Buck with the aforementioned trashcan.

A flip dive takes Kushida down again but he's able to block a suplex back inside. Kushida starts firing off some kicks to the arm and grabs the Hoverboard lock (modified Kimura), only to have Omega get his legs into the ropes. Something like a handspring kick to the head drops Kenny again and Kushida nails a nice top rope flip dive to the floor.

Back in and we hit another Hoverboard lock but Omega rolls out again, this time into a quick suplex. Omega takes him into the corner for a superplex, only to have Kushida stay smart with a Hoverboard lock, complete with a flying armbar to bring Kenny right back down for a huge crash. Kushida shrugs off a jumping knee to the face (as you do) and blasts Omega in the jaw to put the champ down. Back up and Omega tries a German suplex but gets pulled down into the Hoverboard lock.

Taguchi takes out the Bucks as the hold is broken, only to have Omega win the slugout. Oh wait he holds his arm after the brawling is over because he sells. A sitout powerbomb gets two on Kushida and Omega puts him up for the One Winged Angel (a reverse piledriver out of an electric chair) but Kushida reverses into one of the worst looking small packages I've ever seen to get the title back. Omega's shoulder was so ridiculously off the mat it was unforgivable.

Rating: B-. I was liking the match but the arm work didn't go anywhere and that ending looked horrible. However, the good vs. evil story was working here and Kushida looked better than I've seen him look in almost any of his matches. Omega would become the new leader of the Bullet Club the next day and it was a nice, though not great, farewell to the junior heavyweight division.

IWGP Tag Team Titles: G.B.H. vs. Bullet Club

Yes another title match with Bullet Club involved. In this case it's Karl Anderson/Doc Gallows defending for the Club against Togi Makabe/Tomoaki Honma. The Club has the good looking Bullet Babe (Amber Gallows, Doc's wife) in their corner, which is better than the Bucks again.

Big fan favorite Honma starts with Anderson and the Club quickly takes over in the corner. A quick tag brings Makabe in to clean house with right hands as the fans are suddenly much more interested after not having much of a reaction to the ROH guys. Everything breaks down for a bit and Doc gets in a chain to Makabe's neck (complete with an F bomb) and the champs take over. Back in and it's Makabe in trouble with a lot of hard shots to the mouth for two.

Anderson is starting to get annoyed and walks into a clothesline, allowing the hot tag to Honma as house is cleaned. Gallows trips him up to give the champions control again and a reverse 3D plants Honma very nicely. Anderson puts Honma up in a fireman's carry for a running boot from Gallows, knocking it into a spinning flapjack for a great crash. Honma is put up top and has to escape a super cutter, only to get caught in a running Liger bomb for two.

Back down and Honma blocks some RKO's before headbutting Karl square in

the chest. The hot tag brings in Makabe for some hard clotheslines to finally drop the much bigger Gallows. Honma starts hitting a bunch of headbutts, capped off by a falling version from the top rope to Doc. Makabe adds a top rope knee drop for the pin and the titles in a big upset.

Rating: C-. Again, not bad but nothing that I really cared about. I'm assuming Honma getting a title is a big deal but they really didn't put that over too well. I liked the story here of the native Japanese wrestlers fighting the evil foreigners but it still wasn't the most interesting thing in the world.

Ad for upcoming shows.

Hirooki Goto vs. Tetsuya Naito

This is the only non-title match on the show. Naito has two masked men with him and seems to be a heel here after having turned his back on the fans. Striker takes this chance to continue his show long trend of talking about all the heat he has as a commentator. You know, because people talk about him. As has happened too many times tonight, Naito's goons jump Goto from behind before the bell to give the heel an early advantage.

Everything quickly breaks down and the goons also beat up Captain New Japan who is here due to no apparent reason. Or at least no explained reason. Goto takes a big chair shot to the head and a neckbreaker from the apron puts him through the table, leaving Naito to pose in the ring like a real villain. Back in and we hit a headscissors on Goto before Naito just pulls his hair. Well he certainly is being evil.

Goto dropkicks the knee out and starts firing off some kicks to the chest, only to have Naito easily kick him down in the corner. Naito puts him on top for a superplex, only to get countered into a sunset bomb (Tatsu: "Really? Really?") for two. Goto starts no selling kicks to the head but loses a slugout because you have to trade forearms at some point. The referee gets bumped and here are the goons to help, only to have one mist the other by mistake. Naito low blows Goto and gets a nice rollup for two, only to have Goto pop up with a suplex into a side slam

(think something like Matt Morgan's Hellevator) for the pin out of nowhere.

Rating: D+. I really didn't care about this and I easily could have seen it cut off the show. That's the problem with this show as a whole: so much stuff is being crammed into here and it's making the show feel a lot longer than it needs to be. I'm still not entirely sure what the story was here and that's not good on a show this big, especially when there shouldn't be a language issue.

NEVER Openweight Title: Tomohiro Ishii vs. Katsuyori Shibata

Ishii is defending and let me stop here for a second. I've heard a lot of glowing things about this division and this style of match. I've also seen a few of the matches that receive such high praise from a lot of fans and I do not care for it. I'll spare you a very long rant that will get me in trouble and just say this isn't my style. I understand why some fans like it and even like it a lot, but this really isn't my kind of wrestling. I've had similar opinions changed before, but this kind of match has never done anything for me.

Before the match, Striker says the previous match between the two of them received five stars from the Wrestling Observer Newsletter, which is really rare. Well maybe in America, whereas in Japan you get four and a half for a good sneeze. They slug it out to start and trade the big forearms for the first time. Shibata takes over and slowly kicks at Ishii's head but Ishii pops up and gets in his face. Now they take turns sitting down and dare each other to kick each other in the back. Ishii gets the worst of it but is allowed to chop Shibata over and over.

A big forearm puts Ishii down but he pops up with a Saito suplex. Shibata kicks him in the head for two and slaps on a modified octopus hold. That goes nowhere and it's time for another slugout with Ishii getting the better of it and taking Shibata into the corner for a quick facewash. Shibata comes back with a quick dropkick and tries something like a triangle choke. Ishii gets over to the ropes and they slug it out again until a double clothesline puts them both down.

Back up again and Ishii starts firing off chops to the throat (actually

illegal) before powerbombing Shibata down for two. A superplex is countered into a Shibata armbars which he snaps down over the top. Shibata clotheslines him down and slaps on a rear naked choke to slow things down again. More kicks to the back keep Ishii in trouble until he blasts Shibata in the chest with a headbutt. Now they just headbutt each other for some very cringe worthy sounds. Ishii starts firing off some clotheslines for two until Shibata fires off a bunch of kicks, capped off by a running kick to the seated Ishii's chest for the pin and the title.

Rating: C+. This is a really hard one to grade as I definitely didn't hate it and it's a lot less annoying than I was expecting but I had almost no reaction to this. The match runs about seventeen minutes and you really could have cut out a good chunk of it to help shorten this way too long show. Again I get the idea here but I just don't care for it.

Video on AJ Styles vs. Shinsuke Nakamura, which is happening for the first time and is rightfully being billed as a dream match.

Intercontinental Title: AJ Styles vs. Shinsuke Nakamura

Nakamura is defending and one of the guys I like best in New Japan. Styles is Bullet Club (with no seconds here) and I don't think he needs much of an explanation. Feeling out process to start as they have nearly an hour and a half for the last two matches here. Nakamura takes it to the mat and gets nowhere, meaning it's time for another standoff. Back up and Nakamura drives him into the ropes before they trade headlocks. Things start to speed up and AJ ducks the running knee.

We get AJ's drop down into the dropkick spot but the champ quickly kicks him down and drops a knee. AJ goes to the ropes but gets pulled down, possibly reagrivating his bad back. Nakamura gives him some space but AJ pops up and nails him from behind to take over. A quick bridging reverse crossface (think something like the Last Chancery if the feet are tied together) has Nakamura in trouble but he pops up with a backbreaker to send AJ to the floor.

The champ drives him into the barricade to keep the back in trouble. An enziguri puts Styles in the corner but the running knee misses in the corner. That's fine with Nakamura as he puts Styles on the corner for a

running knee to the already bad back. Well you can't fault his psychology.

AJ avoids another charge and hits the springboard forearm, which he really shouldn't be able to do with his back so screwed up but I love that move so I can forgive it. Styles gets him over with a snap suplex into the corner, only to hurt his back even more. A quick Backstabber has AJ in trouble but he grabs the Calf Killer out of nowhere.

Nakamura reverses into an armbar so AJ gets to his feet and drops a big right hand to break it up. AJ is able to pick him up for a torture rack (what back injury?) and spins Nakamura out into a powerbomb for two. The Styles Clash is broken up and Nakamura jumps to the middle rope for the knee to the chest but can't follow up.

Back up and we get the slow forearms (which I can live with after a long match like this) until AJ scores with the Pele, only to take a running knee to the chest for two. Nakamura gets back up and charges right into a knee from AJ, followed by a 450 for another two count. There's a cross armbreaker on AJ which is switched over into a triangle choke but AJ lifts it up into a one armed Styles Clash for a VERY close near fall.

With nothing else working, AJ takes him to the corner for a super Styles Clash, only to have Nakamura kick him in the and put him on the shoulders for a fireman's carry into a falcon's arrow from the top for another insanely close two. Both guys are barely able to get up until Nakamura blasts him with a running knee to the back of the head. Another one to the chest is enough to finally retain Nakamura's title.

Rating: A-. The back injury just stopping in the middle of the match hurt a bit but the back and forth bombs helped it quite a bit. This was about two guys beating on each other as long as they could and that's all it needed to be. For once it did feel like a dream match and it lived up to the hype. Really good match but the back not instantly healing halfway through would have made it even better.

They fist bump post match.

We recap the very long history between Kazuchika Okada vs. Hiroshi

Tanahashi, who have been trading the World Title for the better part of ever. Since January 4, 2011, these two and AJ have been the only three World Champions in the company. Again, you think they might need some fresh blood? The idea is that Okada is going to be the new star and take Tanahashi's place but he has to beat Tanahashi here at Wrestle Kingdom.

IWGP World Title: Kazuchika Okada vs. Hiroshi Tanahashi

Okada is defending and Tanahashi won the shot by winning the G-1 Climax tournament (not exactly but close enough). This is their eighth match and it's a tie (3-3-1) coming in. At least it's not one sided. Okada has Gedo in his corner. Very slow feeling out process to start with Okada putting him up against the rope and giving Tanahashi a condescending pat on the chest. A forearm puts Tanahashi down but another does the same to Okada.

They get in each others' faces and it's the champion kicking Tanahashi in the face to take over. That means it's time to hit the mat with neither guy being able to get the better of it. Tanahashi takes a small advantage with a headlock but Okada counters into one of his own. Now we get somewhere as Tanahashi starts in on the leg. Again it doesn't seem to matter as Okada pops up to try a tombstone, only to have Tanahashi wind up on the apron.

The leg work hasn't had much effect though as Okada is able to dropkick him out to the floor for a big crash. A running cross body puts Tanahashi over the barricade, which apparently is a callback to last year's match. Now that's a good use of English commentary as I never would have remembered that from a match I haven't seen in a year. We hit the chinlock with a knee in Tanahashi's back, followed by a running elbow in the corner and a DDT for no cover.

Some uppercuts stagger Tanahashi and he misses a running dropkick to the knee. Tanahashi is right back at it and the second dropkick to the knee works, allowing him to start the comeback. A dragon screw leg whip in the ring and another on the corner (that's a new one) has Okada in even more trouble and the Sling Blade on the apron drops him again. Tanahashi is right back up with a high cross body to the floor and Okada has to dive back in at nineteen to beat the count.

Back in and a middle rope High Fly Flow (frog splash) crushes the knees again as Tanahashi is getting creative. Okada grabs a quick White Noise onto the knee but can't follow up. I can buy that actually as he had to hit something big and he sacrificed his own body to slow Tanahashi down. Back up and they slug it out again with Okada's knees suddenly being fine enough for three straight dropkicks. A top rope dropkick gets two for the champ and a top rope elbow (gah) gets the same.

Tanahashi grabs another leg whip to get a breather but has to block a dropkick (GAH) and counter into a Texas cloverleaf. He can't get it all the way on though and Okada rolls out, only to take the Sling Blade. The High Fly Flow misses and a tombstone (you really could have cut out the leg work part of this match and not missed a thing) plants Tanahashi. Now the Rainmaker connects for two (BECAUSE IT'S A LAME CLOTHESLINE!) and Okada casually pops up top for a High Fly Fly Flow of his own.

If you've watched a main event style wrestling match in any country in the last fifteen years, you know what's coming next. Tanahashi hits a Rainmaker of his own before going back to the knee in vain. I say in vain as Okada lifts him up for another tombstone, only to have Tanahashi reverse into a third Sling Blade.

A dragon suplex (always liked that move) gets two and two straight High Fly Flows get another near fall. Now we're getting somewhere on these false finishes. Tanahashi goes up again but dives into a dropkick with Okada holding his ribs instead of his knee. A good looking dropkick sets up three straight Rainmakers (he actually followed through on the third) to retain Okada's title.

Rating: B+. Yeah it's big, yeah it's epic, yeah it tells a story, and I guess that completely excuses the waste of time spent on the legs and THE RAINMAKER BEING A REALLY LAME FINISHER because it's some saga or whatever. Of course I'm sure the New Japan fans who worship this stuff will be talking about fighting spirit or whatever as it's the grand out for pretty much any criticism you can throw at this style of wrestling.

I actually liked Styles vs. Nakamura a good bit more than this one as the legs being abandoned here was actually ticking me off with Okada flying

all over the place without even wincing. Tanahashi was trying but there's only so much you can do when you tear the knees to pieces and five minutes later Okada is flying off the top. Also, I get that it's an epic main event and needed the time, but when a show is pushing five hours, I was kind of begging for this to end already when it hit twenty five minutes and it had ten more to go. It's very good, but the near universal praise these two get really doesn't hold up.

Post match Okada gets the big victory speech (With Tatsu FINALLY offering something by translating. I completely get why he didn't say much all night as his English is rather limited but his role could have easily been eliminated.) and says he's awesome. We should all stay tuned.

Overall Rating: B+. This was LONG. Last year's show was under four hours and this one was over five (including the pre-show), which I'm sure has a lot to do with this being a good bit lower. You really could have cut some of this show out (the six man and Goto vs. Naito would be a great place to start, plus trimming the opener by about five minutes) and really not missed much. That's a common issue with this show though and I'm not surprised it was a problem again here.

The show definitely had a better flow this year and jumped from match to match really easily. I got into almost every in one way or another to keep things from getting dull and there's some good action throughout. Nothing on the show is truly bad, but it wasn't until the final matches that things really started to pick up.

Now that being said, I really can't get over the praise the main event gets. I mean, does selling mean nothing in Japan? I'm well aware that it happens in America too, but this is supposed to be the greatest wrestling in the history of ever and their ace is flying off the top and ignoring a good stretch of leg work mere minutes later. Seeing that at the end of a show I really wanted to end isn't the best idea in the world.

Overall though, the problem here is the length. No show, including Wrestlemania, needs to be this long. Get this thing under four hours (start by cutting down some of that battle royal and put another match on the pre-show) and it's instantly better. The show is definitely good and

worth watching, though I'd highly recommend fast forwarding through a match here or there.

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