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Krush kicks off 2013 on January 14th with one of the best tournaments in the promotion's history, a 67kg tournament featuring Yuta Kubo, Yuji Nashiro, Houcine Bennoui, Abdallah Ezbiri, Yuya Yamamoto, Shintaro Matsukura, Makihira Keita and Hitoshi Tsukagoshi. While the participants were announced over the course of the past few weeks, the quarterfinal matchups were just announced at a press conference earlier today. In the top half of the bracket, 2011 K-1 MAX Japan tournament winner Yuji Nashiro faces Abdallah Ezbiri while 2009 K-1 MAX World Tournament Semi-Finalist Yuya Yamamoto faces -63kg WILDRUSH League runner-up Hitoshi Tsukagoshi. In the lower half of the bracket, ISKA Light Welterweight champion Yuta Kubo takes on Houcine Bennoui while 2012 Krush 70kg Youth GP champion Shintaro Matsukura faces Makihira Keita. The biggest note from this is that Krush seemed to match the foreigners with their top two fighters in Kubo and Nashiro, producing the tournament's best two quarterfinal matchups. The winners of those fights will be favored to win their semi-final fights as well and move on to the finals, though both Matsukura and Yamamoto have the power to cause problems should they make it to the semis. Unfortunately for fans, Matsukura vs Yamamoto 3 looks a bit unlikely as the fight would have to happen in the finals and even if it were to happen, neither fighter is renowned for his gas tank. Other interesting rematch possibilities are a Kubo vs Ezbiri final and a Nashiro vs Yamamoto semifinal. Check back to LiverKick in the days leading up to the tournament for my full tournament breakdown and a ranking of each fighter's chances.

The other news Krush brought was that, once again, Andy Howson would have to be replaced due to an injury. Howson was set to face Krush 55kg champion Shota Takiya, but will be replaced by Mike Alamos. If the name looks familiar, it's because Mike is the younger brother of Lumpinee Stadium Super Lightweight champion Damien Alamos. Alamos is 18 years old and has complied a 14-0-0 (7 KO) record. The hard-hitting Takiya will be a very tough test for him.

The injury bug also bit former RISE champion Kan Itabashi, who was set to face Junpei Aotsu. He will be replaced by Naoki Ishikawa, who is fresh off of his 2nd straight draw against 60kg champ Hirotaka Urabe on the 14th. A win could easily vault Ishikawa into a 4th fight with Urabe.