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Krush announced earlier today that 2-time K-1 MAX Japan Tournament champion, 2010 World MAX Tournament finalist and current ISKA Middleweight champion Yoshihiro Sato would be returning to Krush to take on former Krush 70kg champion and current NJKF Super Welterweight champion Kenta at Krush.26 on January 26th. Sato (49-19-0, 20 KO) takes his first fight in Krush since Krush.16 in February where he defeated Fadi Merza to claim the ISKA Middleweight title. He has not faced Japanese opposition since a decision win over Yuji Nashiro in 2010 and has lost two in a row to Shemsi Beqiri and Sanny Dahlbeck in GLORY. While it was inarguable that Sato was the top Japanese fighter at 70kg in 2010, the division has seen the re-emergence of Yasuhiro Kido as well as the appearance of new talent like Kenta, Yuji Nashiro and Takafumi Morita, among others. While Sato is still, without a doubt, a top 2 or 3 fighter at the weight in Japan, his lack of domestic opposition in recent years makes it hard to determine if he is still a divisional kingpin, or if he has been surpassed. Kenta (25-10-3, 8 KO) will look for a fresh start in 2013 after a rough 2012 that saw him lose to TOMOYUKI, Yasuhiro Kido and Soichiro Miyakoshi, losing his Krush and WBC Japan titles in the latter two fights. He also managed wins over Shu Kiire and Takenaka Shirakami, defending his NJKF title in the latter, but his standing in the division has taken a big hit. The winner of this fight is likely the #1 contender for the 70kg title, which Yasuhiro Kido defends against Takuro Moriya at a date yet to be determined, but the resulting winner of what is essentially a 4-man tournament will be able to claim that he is the #1 70kg fighter in Japan. For Sato, a win means reinforcing what many still believe and it sets up a likely rematch with Yasuhiro Kido in a showdown between, at least in my opinion, the top two Middleweights in Japan. For Kenta, a win means regaining divisional relevance and a likely rubber match with Kido which could vault him into divisional supremacy, a place he seemed destined for in 2011.

This fight joins the opening rounds of the Krush 58kg tournament and the 2013 55kg WILDRUSH League.