

Choosing the fight of the year was the most difficult choice because of the limited access to fights that fans outside of Japan had. Because of this, I only selected 6 fights as contenders, 3 that there were video of and 3 that there weren't. While I was tempted to choose a fight that there was video of, there was one fight in particular that stood out among the others, despite the fact we have not seen video of it yet.

Winner: **Nobuchika Terado vs Andy Howson (Krush.21)** - While video has yet to surface of this fight, it was chosen as Krush's 2012 fight of the year. Howson started strong, dropping Terado 2 or 3 times in the opening round and a half and looked to be well on his way to victory. Terado, who was knocked out by Krush champion Shota Takiya in just 71 seconds earlier in the year, did not want to be a quick KO victim again and dug deep and dropped Howson. He followed up with two more knockdowns in the 2nd round, forcing the referee to stop the bout and defending his ISKA Super Bantamweight title. He snagged victory from the jaws of defeat and put on one of the year's most exciting and spectacular performances in doing so.

Runners up: Yuki vs Yuto Watanabe (RISE 87) - Sticking with the theme of improbable comebacks, Yuki and Yuto Watanabe squared off at RISE 87 in a fight for Yuki's 63kg title. It was Yuki's first defense and a fight he was favored in. However, Watanabe started strong in the first round and scored a knockdown, then went on to win the 2nd round and draw in the 3rd, giving him a 3 point lead with just 2 rounds left. Yuki closed the gap in the 4th, but needed at least two knockdowns to win the fight outright and at least one to force an extension round. In the 5th round, Yuki hurt Watanabe and dropped him, meaning the fight would likely go to an extension round. However, Yuki saw his opportunity and took it, forcing a standing 8 count as

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he battered Watanabe with several unanswered punches. When the scores were announced, two of the judges saw the fight for Yuki with the third having it scored a draw and Yuki retained his title in dramatic fashion.

Satoru Suzuki vs Bovy Sor Udomson (Shootboxing 2012 act.1) — Since coming to Shootboxing in 2009, Bovy has proven he is no stranger to wild, exciting brawls, putting on some of the promotion's best fights including fight of the year contenders in 2009, 2010 and 2012. This year's fight saw him face off against former boxer Satoru Suzuki. Suzuki started very strong, knocking Bovy down about half way through the round. Somehow, Bovy managed to get up despite smacking his head quite hard against the ground, but suffered another knockdown, putting him down 4 points after just 1 round (in Shootboxing, knockdowns result in a 2 point deduction each). Despite the deep hole he found himself in, Bovy stormed back in rounds 2 and 3, outbrawling the boxer and almost scoring knockdowns of his own. Unfortunately, he was unable to do so and Suzuki found himself the winner after 3 rounds.

Chang Hyun Lee vs Genji Umeno (K-1 Rising World GP Final 16) Over the course of 2011 and 2012, Genji Umeno had become one of Japan's most highly touted fighters, using 2011 to clear out the Featherweight division and start a run at the Lumpinee Stadium title. Despite getting himself ranked, he chose to take a fight in K-1 and move up in weight to 61kg. His first opponent at the new weight and under the new ruleset was unknown Korean Chang Hyun Lee, a training partner of Sun Hyun Lee who had scored a big upset of his own in his first fight in K-1. Despite looking like he had adapted well to the new ruleset, Umeno was having a tough time getting away from Lee's combinations, as he was able to land at will throughout the first round. Umeno came out stronger in the 2nd round, landing combinations of his own, but not without eating more shots from the Korean. The 3rd round was the decisive round as Lee looked a bit tired in the first minute, but dropped Umeno with a huge overhand right. The knockdown seemed to energize both fighters as they both went for broke in the final two minutes, landing power shots, but neither man was able to drop the other and the fight ended. Lee had upset Umeno with the decisive knockdown, taking a 29-28 decision on all 3 cards.

Hirotaka Urabe vs Naoki Ishikawa III (Krush.25) - After starting the year with a draw at Krush.15 on January 9th, 60kg champ Hirotaka Urabe and #1 contender Naoki Ishikawa met for the third time, with Urabe's title on the line for the 2nd time. Both had gone undefeated over the course of the year and looked to end the year with a strong win. Ishikawa came out hot, wobbling Urabe in the 1st en route to a knockdown. Not to be shown up, Urabe came back in the 2nd and dropped Ishikawa to even the score at 18-18. Knowing the 3rd round would be the deciding one, the two went for broke and produced one of the best rounds of 2012, disregarding defense and looking to take control of the round. In the end, no winner was decided as the two drew for the second time in as many title fights and ended their 2012 the same way it started. Next year will likely see them meet for a 4th time and hopefully it is as exciting as their 3rd

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encounter.

Keisuke Miyamoto vs Ryuya Kusakabe (NJKF: Kick to the Future 6) - Kusakabe is no stranger to entertaining fights, as his run through the Krush 55kg tournament saw him put on 2010 and 2011 fight of the year contenders against Nobuchika Terado and Shota Takiya, respectively. 2012 was no different story as he set out to defend his WBC Japan Super Bantamweight title against MA Kick champion Keisuke Miyamoto. Over the course of 5 rounds, the two exchanged frequently, much to the delight of the Korakuen Hall crowd, and at the end of 5 rounds, Miyamoto was given a unanimous decision. The fight saw Miyamoto emerge as one of Japan's new stars, but it also helped cement Kusakabe as one of the country's most exciting fighters.