On March 17th, RISE will host their first major event of the year, excluding the Infinity.II co-promotion with M-1, at Korakuen Hall and it is already shaping up to be a huge event.

The first fight to be announced for the card that was not announced at Infinity.II was a highly anticipated rematch between Genji Umeno and Chang Hyun Lee. The two first met at the K-1 FINAL 16 in October in a super fight that was meant to showcase Umeno to a wider audience. What we got instead was the fight of the year and the emergence of a new star in Lee, who broke out much like his training partner Sun Hyun Lee. Since, Umeno has fought just once, a one-sided 3rd round TKO of Korean fighter Kim Sung Ryeol at Infinity.II. Likewise, Chang Hyun has fought just once since their fight, knocking out Daiki Nagashima at the first Infinity event. The good news for fans is that this fight will be a 5 rounder. While that could mean both fighters may try to pace themselves a bit more, Umeno will likely want to start quick and I can imagine Lee would be obliged to do so as well.

Previously announced at Infinity.II was a fight between Masahiro Yamamoto and Karim Bennoui. Yamamoto was the last person to hold the It's Showtime 61kg title, winning it from Javier Hernandez last July. He is currently riding a 6-fight win streak, dating back to a 3-fight losing streak in 2010. Bennoui held that same title after winning it in March of 2011 from Sergio Wielzen. However, he lost it in his first defense to the aforementioned Hernandez in a fight of the year contender just 3 months later. This will be Bennoui's first fight in Japan, though he was originally scheduled to face Koya Urabe at Krush.25 in December before an injury forced him out. Since the loss to Hernandez, Bennoui has scored a pair of wins over Krush 63kg champ Thomas Adamandopoulos.

Also announced at Infinity.II was a RISE 65kg title fight rematch between current champ Koji Yoshimoto and #1 contender Yasuomi Soda. The two first met at RISE 86 last January with Yoshimoto handing Soda his first pro defeat by a narrow margin. Since that fight, Yoshimoto has fought just once, but scored a big win over Raz Sarkisjan at Infinity in December. Soda is 2-0 since their first encounter, stopping Dong-soo Kim and earning his rematch with a win over Yukihiro Komiya. Soda has likely improved since their first bout while Yoshimoto isn't getting any younger at 33, but I expect a close fight once again, though I can see Soda coming out on top this time.

The last fight set for the event as of now is a fight for the vacant RISE 55kg title between Dyki and Seiya Rokukawa. After back to back losses about a year ago in the RISE 55kg tournament final to Kenji Kubo and afterwards to fellow semifinalist Ryuma Tobe, Dyki seemed to be on the outside looking in. However, he has since gone 4-0 with wins over MA Kick champ Takashi Ohno, Shooto champ Mikihito Yamagami, J-Network champ Hiroaki Mizuhara and Ariaki Okada. On top of that, Kenji left kickboxing altogether for boxing while Tobe hasn't been seen since his knockout loss to Katsuki Sakaki in Krush and Dyki has found himself as the top Super Bantamweight in RISE, getting him seeded into this vacant title fight. Rokukawa is 5-1 since 2012, winning the DEEP*KICK 55kg tournament with a pair of knockouts to start 2012, but losing his undefeated pro record against Takashi Ohno at RISE 89. He has won 3 in a row, including a defense of his DEEP*KICK title and a pair of wins to earn him this fight in the RISE 4-man 55kg Tournament at Infinity.II where he narrowly edged out Yuta Murakoshi in the semifinals by an extension round split decision before knocking out Hiroki Maeda in the finals.