

Royal Rumble Count-Up: 1989

Royal Rumble 1989

Date: January 15, 1989

Location: The Summit, Houston, Texas

Attendance: 19,000

Commentators: Gorilla Monsoon, Jesse Ventura

We have arrived at Pay Per View for this one and just looking at the card you can tell things are...about the same actually. Again there are just four matches and a segment, although this one is an improvement. The matches not called the Rumble aren't exactly jumping off the page at me, but looking at a few names in the Rumble it's a massive improvement with guys like Hogan, Savage, Andre, and DiBiase in it.

The segment is also better as it's a posedown between Ultimate Warrior and Rick Rude who were kind of feuding at the time. You can just tell that the show has a much higher production value and has had more time put into it which likely will mean a much better product. Granted that's just on paper.

I wonder how the show itself would turn out. I wish there was a way I could find out. Oh. I guess I could just watch it. I think I'll do that, and I might as well write about it too, so why don't you come along? If I get hungry I can always eat your leg.

Our opening video is Vince listing off all of the participants in the match. I'm not sure if that's a good thing or not because it keeps surprises from occurring which is one of the highlights of the match. I get what they're going for here but at the same time it's just a bit odd.

Jesse's shirt has a big shark on it. That's most odd. He and Gorilla run down the card and we're ready to go.

A bunch of guys take WAY too long to say they'll win.

Dino Bravo/Rougeaus vs. Hart Foundation/Jim Duggan

What is with the Rumble and 2/3 fall matches? This makes three in two years. Isn't that a bit of overkill guys? This is really just about two feuds being lumped into one match which is fine. They say it's international rules to justify the 2/3 falls which is fine, but the choice is just odd indeed. It's not necessarily good or bad but just odd. The heels have Frenchie Martin and Jimmy Hart with them.

Monsoon says that the 2x4 is a mascot and not a foreign object. That's just odd indeed. The Harts do this weird thing of taking Bret's glasses off and make it a spectacle. I don't remember them doing that ever before. We start with power vs. power in Bravo vs. Neidhart. They reference the weightlifting thing from last year which makes me want to rip my hair out. The USA chant goes up for an American and two Canadians (Neidhart has dual citizenship).

They're going really slowly here and I'm not sure if I like that. They talk about Bret's awesome in ring ability which is completely true. It's good to know that they saw the talent that far back. Bret then takes the side suplex from Bravo and the elevated seated senton from the Rougeaus (both of their finishers) to make it 1-0 for the heels. Bret has to start the next fall as we are LIVE IN HOUSTON!

Gorilla once again botches the use of the term literally as no one is hanging from the rafters. I don't know why but I will never stop marking out for the jumping reverse elbow from anyone. That move is just awesome. Once again Bravo does his stupid little dance before he makes a tag. I've never gotten what the deal was with that. Bret is still in there by the way. Again, it never ceases to amaze me when fans chant USA for two Canadian wrestlers.

Monsoon tries to cover for them by saying it's for Duggan, but why chant for him when he's not even in the match at the

moment? Either way it's just stupid. We hit a rest hold with Bret getting beaten on even more than usual in this match. Not sure why he's been in there so long but it's probably the best thing they could do. The Rougeaus do a switch and for the life of me I don't get how people couldn't tell them apart.

They look nothing alike. The abdominal stretch is hooked and Gorilla complains. Good thing that some things never change. FINALLY Bret tags out and Duggan is in. After a lot of double teaming Duggan pins one of the Rougeaus to tie us up at one. For some reason Hacksaw is over and by far and away the biggest star in this match. I don't get that and never will.

The heels take over for a very short time as Bravo idiotically (at least he's living up to his reputation) tries to ram Duggan's head into the turnbuckle. The face comeback lasts all of a second though as Duggan is beaten on even more. After the luke warm tag to Bret, we have a big thing of calamity and Duggan pops Bravo with the board to let Bret pin him. I love faces getting away with everything they want to.

Rating: C+. Nothing bad at all here, but I just don't get the 2/3 falls aspect. I mean really, why do that? Do these six guys need an extra ten minutes or so? I get that there's a lot of time to fill and a ton of the roster is taken, but I don't get it. To be fair though, the match was fine and there's nothing to complain about from an in ring perspective. It wasn't anything great but perfectly fine.

We see some people picking their numbers.

DiBiase doesn't like his number but pulls in Slick and offers him a deal.

Luke and Butch both get theirs and trade them.

Honky hates his.

Bad News likes his.

Demolition and Jake are indifferent.

The Rockers wish each other good luck.

Super Posedown

This is more or less a body contest between Warrior and Rude. Well that's more interesting than Bravo's weightlifting I suppose. Warrior is IC Champion here. Monsoon says Warrior is pumped up all the time. Make your own steroids joke. Rude is rocking the mustache here. The first pose is the double bicep. Popular support wins this so take a guess as to who is going to win. This is really quite boring.

Jesse and Heenan try to make this seem legit which is helping things out a lot. We move to the abdominal pose for which Heenan has to oil up Rude. That's just creepy to an extent. The third is just called most muscular. If nothing else they're keeping this moving fast. That's the best part about it unlike last year when it took 20 minutes. Also, this is actually in the ring. We go through the third pose and still no one cares. The fourth is a medley which takes up even more time.

Was there supposed to be a point to this? In a shocking development, Rude jumps Warrior and beats the tar out of him with an exercise bar. That was the whole point of this thing and it took too long. Again though, it was far better than the weightlifting thing last year. Warrior gets up and destroys all of the referees and suits that try to help him up and chases after Rude. This was all to set up Rude vs. Warrior at Mania.

Women's Title: Rockin Robin vs. Judy Martin

Robin was this random chick they put the belt on and since she was the epitome of the bathroom break match, they kept the belt on her for over a year. It was retired in 1990 because no one cared and remained that way until Alundra Blayze came

along and held it for about a year, then after about another year of various feuds and champions it was dropped (into the trashcan on Nitro) and didn't come back until the Sable era.

She was just flat out boring, plain and simple, yet of course Vince stuck with her because no one really gave cared about women's wrestling anyway and it was based on wrestling rather than athleticism or looks. Sherri, the woman that Robin took the title from, challenges the winner for a title shot. She wouldn't win. Just after the start of the match she jumps on commentary. There's something that even the commentators aren't sure about but they think it was a DDT.

Again I want to know what the point of hooking the head on a slam is. I don't recall any man other than Earthquake doing that. Sherri sounds like Michelangelo from TMNT 2. This is really short and a relief that Wikipedia has an error. They claim this is about sixteen minutes when it barely breaks five.

I thought this might have been clipped but I can't find a single instance where it goes sixteen, so we'll say that's an error, which is a relief. Robin wins with a second rope cross body after faking one then getting the second. Robin's music is really annoying.

Rating: C. I have to go with average here because other than the ending I don't remember anything about this match. I know that doesn't sound good, but the time in this match and everything in it are complete blanks to me. Nothing at all of note happened in it other than the ending, which was kind of cool as the fake out isn't something that you see that often. I think I get why the division was dropped in about a year.

Sean Mooney is with Slick and the Twin Towers, Akeem and Big Boss Man. Akeem might be the funniest character in wrestling history. Slick denies the deal with DiBiase from earlier. Sean shows the footage of them talking about a deal earlier, which

Slick tries to play off as something about a shoe shine. That was just odd.

Harley Race vs. Haku

A few notes about this match: first of all, it wasn't on the home video release at first so quite a few of you have likely never seen it. It's only been released on the Rumble Anthologies and the original broadcast plus online. Second, this is a one night only return for Race who got really badly hurt against Hogan and had to drop the crown. Haku took it but never beat Race, so Race is back to take his crown.

Before the match, Jesse is sitting on the throne and says he likes it. Thanks for that Jess. I've actually never seen this match all the way through so these will be my legit first thoughts on seeing this in its entirety. When I say not all the way through, I mean I've seen a few stills of it and never any actual video so here we go. Heenan manages both guys so he's set no matter what. I've always liked the throne entrance the king got, but DANG that jobber needs a shirt.

He must weigh about 320 and he's in just regular tights. That's not right. Both guys come out to the same music and in a funny bit, Race is introduced as "The Former King, Harley Race!" That just sounds funny. Race, the king of the heels, jumps Haku early. Both guys have the regal purple on which is amusing as well. I think Race is somehow the face here, which just makes me feel dirty.

The tattoos on Race always looked odd to me as he seems too clean for them I guess you would say. This was a very rare thing here as we have heel vs. heel with Race being the less heelish guy. Race is just old here and is being asked to carry this because he's the only one of the two that knows how to work a good match. Jesse says that he has to give the experience advantage to Race. Well DUH Jess. How can it be something that's debatable?

One guy has wrestled longer than the other. It's not really subjective. The fans are cheering Harley. This just isn't right. They do one of the all time worst collision spots with Race going to the floor. It looked like they were in slow motion on that one. Heenan is his usual masterful self cheering for both guys at various times. This is called the Battle For the Crown because this is a match that was dying for extra billing.

Speaking of dying, Gorilla tries to say that the crowd is hushed in anticipation for the Rumble. You have to give it to Gorilla: he never gave up. Race gets a bad piledriver on the floor as it seems like this is in slow motion again. They're just both so slow that it's almost painful to watch. Race simply had no business being in a ring at this point and it wasn't even his fault. He was just old and injured which certainly isn't something you can pin on him.

He was broke due to a bad business thing (that wasn't his fault) in Kansas City so he had to keep wrestling to pay the bills. He was good for stuff like this: putting over guys that can't wrestle well enough on their own. I love how you can have a guy do some chops at an angle and all of a sudden he's a martial arts master. Goodness that was a lot of A's in a row. After Race dominates for a bit, he misses a punch and gets caught by what we would call Sweet Chin Music to get pinned.

Rating: C-. I feel sorry here because the wrestling and the in ring stuff isn't actually that bad at all. The problem is that it feels like this is in slow motion like I've said a few times. That's really the best way to put it. Race was just so old out there that I'm very glad he went to WCW and became a manager which was what he was far better suited for at this point.

He just was too old here and it was showing bad. Haku was someone that had to be carried and this was his night to be

put over and while he wasn't bad, he certainly wasn't good. The match was bad but the wrestling was ok if that makes any sense at all.

More people say they'll win.

Gene talks to Rude and Heenan about the pose down where Rude says he won. They bail quickly, I'm assuming afraid of the Warrior.

Royal Rumble

I'll spare you from another rule explanation because I'm sure you know it and I already listed them off once. This year they point out the everyman for themselves rule though, which is a change from last year. That opens a big door though as it implies face vs. face and heel vs. heel. Number one is Ax of Demolition. The interval is set at two minutes again and this year they actually make it possible as the match goes over an hour, so sit back because this is going to be a long review.

Actually don't sit back because you might not be able to see the screen. Sit in the middle I guess. Number two is Smash, so we have Demolition going at it to start us off. I love how random of a thing this is, and it's happened at least one other time that I remember with the Steiners I think, and then the Hardys came in at 1 and 3 in 2001. They're the tag team champions here, in the middle of their epic year and a half or so run.

To their credit they beat on each other. It just doesn't look right though. This is like Bubba and D-Von fighting. They're just not good at fighting on their own. There's something about seeing partners fight that just doesn't work. Matt and Jeff were complete failures in their feud, and I think a lot of it is people would rather have them be partners rather than opponents. They just didn't click as opponents and that's a shame.

Andre comes in at three and this is an historic moment, as Demolition immediately beat him to the ground with what looks like ease. Andre looks like Rey Mysterio getting beaten on like this which is something you'll never hear again. Mr. Perfect is 4 which sucks because I wanted more Andre vs. Demolition. Think about this for a minute. Demolition did in about ten seconds what it took Hogan fifteen minutes to do. That's insane.

No wonder those three plus Jake were the best Survivor Series team of all time. All three of them go after the Giant and Andre just shoves Smash out after Perfect distracts him a bit. Perfect is a very young guy here in the company and is rocking just regular tights. Being the Rhodes scholar that Axe is he goes after Perfect and gets beaten up by Andre for his trouble. Number five is the best possible advertisement for murdering something I've ever seen: Ronnie Garvin.

He is easily the most worthless wrestler this side of the Junkyard dog in wrestling history. How in the world did they ever decide to put him over RIC FLAIR for the world title? I just do not get that and never will. Everyone goes after Andre but he just sits on Axe, literally. Greg Valentine is in at six, hopefully willing to use a hammer to crush the cockroach known as Garvin.

We have four against one here with literally everyone that's been in the match so far attacking Andre. Gorilla calls everyone that's beating on Andre a star. That's just amusing. ANDRE GETS RID OF GARVIN!!! I officially love this man. Get him a cow and a vineyard of wine right now!

Jake Roberts is seventh to a huge pop. He was probably the second third biggest face at the time as Warrior wasn't quite there yet and Hogan and Savage were untouchable. Andre just chokes the life out of Jake in the corner which is sweet. That's what I love about Andre: after being quadruple teamed he just grabs someone and chokes them. There's something

completely awesome about that.

He beats anyone that tries to stop him from beating on Jake. That's just sweet. He's protecting Jake so he can have the honor of hurting him. Ron Bass is here now as we get closer to reaching our jobber quota. Just after Bass comes in Andre throws Jake out. Bass is freshly bald thanks to a bad comedy angle with Beefcake. Andre is the white elephant in there at the moment as it's really just about trying to get him out with various incredibly short term alliances.

That right there is why there needs to be at least one giant in every battle royal. They offer the main source of a story in one of these, because traditionally these matches are void of any kind of a story because it's a complete free for all, which is fine because that's the point.

Having someone like Andre in there for about fifteen to twenty minutes gives you a way to have something running through a large part of the match and hold it together, which is the main weakness of all battle royals not known as the Royal Rumble. The next guy in is HBK, who at this time is next to nothing. Perfect throws Axe out.

Shawn and Perfect go at it in what would eventually be one of the most overhyped feuds in wrestling history as the build was awesome but the match kind of sucked, which to be fair was what likely was inevitable. Perfect shows off his brains early by staying in after going over the top. Andre keeps choking people as that was the essence of his offense around this time. I really miss the old school stone looking Rumble logo. The thing was just cool looking.

Jesse says if he were in there he'd go to a neutral corner. Gorilla says if Jesse were in there he'd be out of there. And people wonder why Monsoon got some strange looks at times. After about a minute and a half of waiting, Butch of the Bushwackers gets us into double digits. As he's coming to the

ring, Jake runs back out with Damien and Andre eliminates himself. That's a smart way to keep the feud hot, keep Andre looking credible and get rid of him to keep the match going.

The five jobbers lumber around the ring for a bit because there's no big name in there for them to do anything with, which is the issue with a lot of these things. The timing is getting shorter and shorter here as Honky comes in at 11. Honky had recently lost the IC belt and was in desperate need of a reason to keep his job. He was worthless without the title so until they put him in Rhythm and Blues there was little for him to do.

Of the six guys in there, Shawn is the only face according to Gorilla in some slightly different words. Oh Butch is there too. Yep, Shawn is the only face in there worth anything. Tito balances things out a bit at 12 to a solid pop. I don't get why he never got another big push. He was still great in the ring and was getting big reactions, but of course he was made a jobber to the stars for guys like Barbarian and Warlord.

Gorilla and Jesse discuss some theory about what is considered a good number as not a lot is going on at the moment. To be fair though the crowd is staying hot so there we are. Bad News comes in at 13 as he should have been a far bigger star than he was. Brown vs. Hogan could have been awesome if they had some guts and did it right. Honky is eliminated pretty fast to a decent pop. That's a good sign if nothing else: he's still getting reactions.

This has really slowed down a lot and we need some big names to come in and clear out some of these jobbers. Naturally the next guy in is Marty Jannetty, so if nothing else we have a tag team in there now. A double dropkick that was NOT stolen from the Rock N Roll Express (really, we promise we've never heard of those guys that we stole half our name from. Honest) takes out Bass to get us back down to seven people. I think Tito's knee is hurt.

Thankfully Savage, the WWF Champion and on the brink of a heel turn for the ages, comes in to get the crowd WAY into this. He freaking mugs Bad News who he was having a short but very intense feud with. Arn Anderson comes out next as Savage knocks out Valentine. In the epitome of an IWC wet dream team, Anderson and Savage team up to eliminate Shawn. Dang that was just flat out odd to type. Tully Blanchard is in at 17 as this is slowing down again.

The Brainbusters beat the tar out of Jannetty and prove why they're awesome. They dump him and heeeeeeeere's Hulk at possibly his lowest number ever: 18. I would have loved to have this be a legit draw and see him get like 4. Let's see, how many people does Hogan get rid of to make him look like Superman. Perfect is the first victim as Hogan saves his handshake buddy Savage from him. He beats up the Brainbusters but doesn't eliminate them, which allows them to get rid of Tito.

Since it's gotten a bit crazy, for a recap we have Butch, Hogan, Anderson, Savage, Brown and Blanchard in at the moment. Amazingly, Butch has been in there about fifteen minutes which has to be his biggest accomplishment in the WWF. That's actually quite surprising. At 19 we have the other Marching Moron who licked me at a house show once. Brown puts out Butch to keep us at six guys.

Anderson beats on Hogan which makes me flash back to Nitro just before the NWO showed up. Anderson beat him two weeks straight on Nitro which was a series I always liked. It gave Arn the spotlight that he never really got and definitely was qualified to have. In at 20 is the Hall of Famer Koko B. Ware. That just flat out doesn't work no matter how many times you write it. How in the world is that thing in the HOF but Savage isn't?

I don't care how many times he had Stephanie, enshrine him already! Hogan dumps Koko to a pop. Even the fans didn't like

him. There goes Luke and Hogan's total is at I think three. With three clotheslines inside of 30 seconds he adds both Brainbusters and the Warlord who sets the shortness record at 2 seconds. He stepped in and got a running clothesline to put him out.

To get the record to eight, Hogan runs over and puts out Brown and Savage, the later being by mistake. This would be a major point in the heel turn in about two weeks. Savage is TICKED! Liz comes down to try to straighten things out as Savage offers the handshake to fix things for now. Savage and Liz leave as Boss Man gets in.

He's about 100lbs heavier than his traditional weight. This began another Rumble tradition of the one on one showdown. These two had been the big feud for a good while and the showdown hadn't really come yet so this was a pretty big deal. Not surprisingly Boss Man takes over and Gorilla defends Hogan with the somewhat legitimate argument that Boss Man is fresh.

Hogan takes a decent piledriver and eventually gets back to even as the buzzer rings about three and a half minutes after Boss Man came out. And in a SHOCKING, yes SHOCKING I say, turn of events, it's Boss Man's partner Akeem. Now here's something amusing to me where the bias towards the main event is as evident as ever.

Gorilla starts whining and complaining about how DiBiase must have had something to do with this because there's no way that tag partners could have consecutive numbers and wind up in this position against Hogan. He's completely backwards there. First of all, this is the third time in this Rumble where partners have come in back to back (Rockers and Brainbusters, which more or less gives away that this isn't a random draw).

On top of that, how could DiBiase have known that Hogan would have been in there at this moment all by himself? If nothing else, this would prove that DiBiase had nothing to do with it

as there is no reason for him to assume that Hogan would have A, been in there already when the Twin Towers came in, and B, that Hogan would be alone.

In order to do that, DiBiase would have had to find out what Hogan's number was, and the only ways he could have done that would be to find out Hogan's number directly from Hulk which is unlikely or to have found out all 29 other spots AND managed to spread enough deals around to make sure that Akeem and Boss Man had consecutive numbers after Hogan.

I'm supposed to believe that he managed to pull all this off in less than two hours with the help of just Virgil? Give us some credit there Gorilla. Granted I don't think he put that much thought into what he said, but that's the point of these reviews: to break down things like that and show how stupid some stories can be. In a quite anticlimactic moment, Hogan is hit with a double splash and thrown out. Really, that's all there is to it.

That just came out of nowhere and all of a sudden the fact of how stupid that may have been kicks in. Tell me oh great and mighty Vince: why should I care about the rest of the match? Your top faces are all gone now with about ten entries to go. This wasn't smart booking at all as they backed themselves into a corner for what is likely going to be a weak finish. Hogan of course pulls Boss Man to the floor and beats on him as Beefcake comes out. It's a big tag team brawl minus the tagging.

Hogan says he's going back in and the referees finally do their jobs and keep him from doing so. Hogan pulls Boss Man out AGAIN because this is all about him again, despite him not being world champion or even in the title picture. He and Boss Man fight to the back and they're going to say Boss Man is out because Hogan pulled him over the ropes. In at 25 we have someone that might even be less useful than Garvin in the Red Rooster.

I finally got the joke/idea behind the name of his finisher the Five Arm. It's one better than the forearm. Get it? That lowered my IQ a good bit. The announcers try to figure out who the final five guys will be and naturally they know them inside of 4 seconds. The two faces do the generic beating on the heel because that's Rumble Theory 101. Gorilla actually agrees that Hogan cheated. I never thought I'd hear that.

Barbarian is in next to make what should be a completely one sided match. Barbarian, the genius that he is, beats up the faces and then goes after Akeem on his own. I love idiotic heels. Despite this being 1989, Big John Studd is somehow still a relic here. He goes straight for Akeem in what would become a running theme for the end of this match which I'll get to in a minute. John is a face here on one last hurrah I guess you would call it.

Basically John keeps throwing people out of his way so it's just him and Akeem, which can be translated into the guy that he can do the least with while still looking like he's doing something. Hercules comes in at 28. Just like I thought it would, this has REALLY slowed down since Hogan left and it just doesn't feel right at all. The next to last entrant is Rick Martel, the returned face who is just about to become a heel and a model.

The final guy is DiBiase to few people's shock. If he was supposed to be the big heel, two things: one, he should win, and two he should go on to something big after this. At Mania 5 he had a throwaway match with Brutus. Studd is just a complete waste of time out there as he hasn't actually beaten on anyone other than Akeem. The final eight, all in the ring, are DiBiase, Akeem, Studd, Martel, Red Rooster, Beefcake, Hercules and Barbarian. What a motley crew that is.

Rooster is finally gone and we're at seven. Studd finally fights someone else in the Barbarian. I don't believe it. DiBiase and Barbarian put out Beefcake and Hercules to bring

us down to DiBiase, Barbarian, Studd, Akeem and Martel. Martel puts out Barbarian and then gets knocked out maybe four seconds later to get us down to three.

The heels double team Studd as I can't wait for this to end. Akeem is put out after a mistake and we're down to Studd and DiBiase. He offers money and Studd isn't interested. After a few power moves, Studd causally throws DiBiase over for the most lackluster ending in the history of the Rumble. Virgil comes in and gets beaten up as well. Wow that was dumb.

Rating: C+. This is the first of its kind in a way so you have to take it with a grain of salt. They didn't know what they were doing with the thirty man formula, but I just don't get the point in having Studd win it. I suppose the issue was that they didn't think it was a big deal yet so they gave it to a random guy like they did last year. That's the only thing I can think of at least.

The match really suffers at the end though because once Hogan is gone, there's just no drama or anything at all. Studd winning was almost obvious but not quite. Also, Akeem has been in the final three in both of the first two Rumbles. How insane is that? This was a big improvement over last year, but they still had a lot of bugs to work out. Not bad, but it would be massively improved in the coming years.

In the locker room, Savage goes on a rather long rant about how it was a misunderstanding, but you can see the heel just dying to get out. Liz says that it wasn't a fight or anything like that. The Mania main event was coming and would be obvious today, but back then it was built up so well that it was shocking.

Gorilla and Jesse say some basic stuff before we get a highlight package to end it.

Overall Rating: C-. Average. That's the only way to put this. There's nothing at all here that is going to be considered

great by any means, but nothing at all is really all that bad. You're not going to see anything that rivals Steamboat vs. Savage but there's nothing here that wouldn't hold your attention for the most part. This is where the Rumble is still being fleshed out but you can see the elements there that made it such a great concept for a show.

It's not great and it's not bad, but a lot of work was needed. For once though you could clearly tell that they had the right idea though and things would be much better next year where they would really get it right. I'd say this show is worth seeing once maybe, but you won't be missing anything if you don't see it. If you catch it and have some time to kill you won't think it was a waste of time but you won't be thrilled either. Not bad, but nothing great at all.