

Royal Rumble Count-Up: 1994

Royal Rumble 1994

Date: January 22, 1994

Location: Providence Civic Center, Providence, Rhode Island

Attendance: 14,500

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Ted DiBiase

A year later, and while the roster hasn't changed a ton, it's matured a lot. Yoko has dominated the title scene since winning the title from Hogan in June after the mess that was Mania 9. He's taking on Taker tonight in their first of the two casket matches that they had. Yes, it's that match. We also have Razor in another title match and not in the Rumble as he's now a face and fighting IRS for the IC Title.

The Rumble is more or less Yokozuna and his cronies against Luger with Hart on the side. Yoko had been feuding with Luger but Luger can't have another title shot. Since the Rumble winner gets a title shot, Luger and Cornette who also worked for Yoko made a deal: Luger can fight in the Rumble but Cornette gets to bring in some guys that will represent Yoko.

That would have been nice to have been told to us on the PPV, but why waste time with that when we can remind you that WE ARE LIVE! Also, we have the next chapter in the brother war, which will be nothing but awesome so let's get to it.

The crowd is hot if nothing else. Vince on commentary just works better for some reason, despite me loving Monsoon and Heenan. DiBiase I think was a surprise on the mic here as he just kind of pops up after Vince does the main intro. You have to give him this: he's absolutely insane about his product. I defy you to find someone more dedicated to his company. There's a reason why he's the most successful promoter of all time.

DiBiase gets insane heat and it's a shame he broke his neck and was pushed down the card so far over the years. He says he was in every Rumble to date, which just isn't true, so at least he's got the theory behind being a commentator down already: lie about stuff and hope no one remembers.

Note: this is important for one major reason: Brooklyn Brawler actually WON A MATCH in the dark match, beating Jim Powers. He is officially the joke of the company.

Tatanka vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

This was supposed to be Ludvig Borga but Borga hurt his ankle and never came back. Tatanka starts out fast and this could be a solid match, on this LIVE SHOW! He gets a nice jumping DDT on Bigelow as I can't believe it but Tatanka is actually impressing me. Luna is with Bigelow here in one of the strangest concepts in wrestling history that worked beautifully. For the first time ever, guys in the earlier matches are going to be in the Rumble as well which is something long overdue at this point.

Both announcers have a small orgasm over a running splash. God bless overhyping. Why does Vince always suggest stuff? I don't get that at all. This isn't bad at all, but the bear hug isn't helping it. Vince says that only in the WWF will you ever see a man of Bigelow's size use a moonsault. That is of course until he went to both WCW and ECW and did it there too. It misses though, and Tatanka hits a basic cross body off the top for the win. Wow that came from out of less than nowhere.

Rating: B. This was actually good for what it was: an 8 minute opener. Tatanka won clean and the fans were into him so it got a good reaction. That's what an opener is supposed to do: get the crowd built up a little bit. This wasn't anything great but I've certainly seen worse matches. I liked this one a lot though, so there we are.

We hit the recap button on Bret and Owen's issues and their

teaming up. This stems from the Survivor Series match where Owen was the only member of his team eliminated, which for some reason ticked him the heck off. I guess it was because Bret was in a way the cause of him getting eliminated, but at the same time you could argue that it was only Owen's fault.

Bret said that he would love to help Owen forge a path and legacy in the company, and his way of doing this was helping Owen get his first championship: the tag team titles. How that helps Owen get out of Bret's shadow was never explained but whatever.

We see clips of the Quebecers losing the belts and then getting them back a week later. That was really pointless as it kind of makes them look weak but we can overlook that. We go to Bret and Owen with Todd as Owen is behind Bret in some great symbolism.

Tag Titles: Bret/Owen Hart vs. Quebecers

Quebecers are managed by one Johnny Polo, who in less than a year would be in ECW as a character called Raven. So I've watched about 15 minutes of this so far and I have no complaints. It really is a great tag match. I'm not going to go into the discussion of this match as it's really good and there's nothing I can poke fun at other than DiBiase and Vince trying to sound cool which fails epically. Anyway, after about 13 minutes, we get to the point.

The point of the first 13 minutes: Bret and Owen are awesome. Eventually, Bret has the ropes pulled apart and hits the floor, injuring his knee. Following an overblown sequence in which his knee is hit by a chair, the post, the guard rail and a golf club, his knee is a bit hurt. We hit the ring again and Bret is just getting destroyed. His knee is gone and he can barely stand up. He does however dodge the Quebecers finisher and looks for Owen.

However, there's no tag. Why isn't there a tag? There isn't

one because Bret goes for the Sharpshooter but his knee gives out and the referee calls for the bell due to injury. Owen is TICKED and I can't blame him. As Bret limps to his feet, Owen kicks him in the bad knee, sending him to the mat in agony and turning Owen heel, setting up the EPIC feud for the rest of the year.

On his way to the back Owen says that Bret was selfish and all he had to do was tag Owen and they would be champions. Bret is still holding Owen down and Owen has had enough of it. Despite Bret being in agony, Vince sends Ray Rougeau to the ring to find out about him. Well isn't that nice. As Bret is being stretchered out we go to the back with Todd and Owen.

Owen, with Bret watching him on the stretcher, goes into a great angry rant about Bret's ego and never having a title because of Bret. This is a great promo by Owen here as he just lets out a ton of anger and yells at Bret, although we do get the famous botched line as he says it felt so good when he kicked Bret's leg out of his leg, instead of out from under him. Anyway, this was awesome. DiBiase applauds him.

Rating: A+. It's a great match and a better angle that set up one of the best matches and feuds of all time. What kind of a grade do you expect me to give it? Go find this segment as it's just excellent all around.

IC Title: Razor Ramon vs. IRS

Fink is very excited to announce this match. IRS is really solid on the mic to say the least. JR and Gorilla do commentary here as the other guys do Radio WWF I guess. Razor is insanely over. My goodness the quality of commentary just shot up. The battle royal that Razor kind of won the IC Title in has jumped from 20 people to 30 people in just a few months. Razor is rocking the baby blue tonight.

IRS apparently stole the necklaces and jewelry from Razor and has it in his briefcase, which Gorilla calls a briefer for no

apparent reason. The crowd is on fire for this. That's making up for it being just above average as a match. IRS takes over here and we're in a formula based match here and there's not a thing wrong with that. We hear talk of issues with Michaels and Razor. Oh yes. Also, Razor cost IRS a loss to a man named PJ Walker. He's more commonly known to you as Justin Credible.

We've got a ref bump and Razor prevents the briefcase shot and knocks IRS out with it. Razor sets for the edge but here's Shawn with his IC belt to nail Razor with. Why can't we watch the ladder match now? IRS...gets the three count? Wait what? Ah there's the other referee to explain things here. They did the same thing with a Borga match on a tape I think. We'll ignore the referee's decision being final too. The Edge ends this about 8 seconds later.

Rating: C+. This was about Shawn and Razor, but that's fine. IRS is a fine choice for a midcard heel to keep Razor busy until he gets the major feud going. The match itself was probably about the level of something you would see on Raw or a house show, which doesn't mean that it's bad. This was adequate, that's the best thing I've got for it.

Paul Bearer says nothing out of the ordinary.

WWF Title: Undertaker vs. Yokozuna

This is a casket match. For your backstory here, it's pretty simple: Taker is the only top face that hasn't fought Yoko yet, so this is his shot. Oh and of course Yoko is scared. Yoko comes out first with Cornette, who looks like his twerpy best from the 80s and Fuji. In something that I wish I was making up, Vince cuts off DiBiase to say we are LIVE! I know I make fun of that a lot, but come on now Vinny.

Anyway, this is considered an epic battle, but Taker is just beating the tar out of him. They're trying to make Taker look like a god here and they're doing a pretty epic job. However, despite being slammed into the steps and being fine, salt to

the eyes apparently is his kryptonite as all of a sudden the same move has him messed up. Back in the ring, Yoko's offense that has killed the likes of mere Hogans has no effect here.

Taker beats down Yoko with relative ease and after maybe 6 minutes has him in the casket ready to close the lid when we get to the real part of the match: the run-ins. Crush is first, fighting Taker back but naturally getting beaten down. Kabuki of WCCW fame and Tenryu run in next but are also stopped by Taker. Bigelow comes out as Crush and the others are back up. It's 4-1 now and Fuji has stolen the urn.

Yoko is back up now too, but Paul Bearer actually takes out Cornette and Fuji to get it back! Here he comes again! Taker is fighting them off again, but a shot from the salt bucket apparently does nothing at all. Adam Bomb is here now. Here's Jeff Jarrett to make it 7-1. The Headshrinkers make that number 9 but Bearer holds up the urn and **TAKER COMES BACK AGAIN!**

Ok, now wait a minute. I can get him coming back 4-1, considering Tenryu and Kabuki were just henchmen and he's shown that he can beat the tar out of Yoko on his own. Crush is tough but Taker is better, so that's actually plausible. But come on: NINE guys?

Oh if that's not enough, Diesel is here too and finally they get him in the casket. Just remember the match is still going on here. Something occurs to me. These guys are coming down presumably because they hate Taker or they've been bought off I'm assuming.

A question rises from this: **WHERE ARE THE OTHER FACES???** I mean DANG. Savage hates Crush, Luger hates half the guys in there, Tatanka had a match with Bigelow earlier tonight, it's the mid 90s so I'm sure Razor has beaten half these guys for the IC Title already. The Steiners can't stand the Headshrinkers, and yet not a single one of them come down. I

don't think that was ever addressed but it makes no sense.

If nothing else, Taker could have been turned heel when he got back over that, but I guess it wouldn't fit witht he character. Blast it has a big logic hole in it though. Anyway, Taker AGAIN fights back, this time from in the casket but Yoko steals the urn and hits him with it, which apparently is more powerful than 9 guys beating on him but whatever. The top comes off the urn, and green smoke comes pouring out of it.

Taker stops getting up, and after a ton of finishers and big moves, FINALLY they close the casket. Bigelow jumping on top of it as soon as it's shut made me chuckle for some reason. However, we're not done yet. The heels, all 12 of them, start wheeling the casket back, and the gong is heard. Smoke similar to the kind from the urn starts coming out of the casket as the lights go out.

On the screen, we see a shot of Taker lying on his back (despite being thrown in on his stomach/side) and his eyes pop open. He gives a ridiculously over the top speech, which amazingly can be heard throughout the arena, more or less saying that he'll be back. Oh also, we're led to believe this is inside the casket, despite seeing the bottom of the lid of the casket is plain wood. We hear electrical sounds and the screen looks like it's being electrocuted, until the image of Taker actually explodes.

I don't mean that in a figurative sense. I mean it looks like the Death Star blowing up, but all that's left is a negative picture of Taker, as in his body and clothes are all white and his skin is black if you know what kind of picture I'm talking about. Oh we're not done yet. That image is then changed so that it looks like he's rising up out of the screen, and then to top it off, a man (allegedly Marty Jannetty) is on top of the screen and raised up on visible strings into the rafters.

There's just one problem: On PPV, YOU CAN'T SEE ANY OF THIS!

I've seen this show about 10 times and until I read about it, I had zero idea what was going on that Vince and DiBiase were freaking out about. This time I knew what to look for and I could see it, but DANG I had no idea that's what was going on for years.

Vince and Ted scream about how supernatural that was. After the heels run off, Bearer has the now smokeless urn and is pointing up while pushing the casket away. That was just...uh yeah.

Rating: F. This is an F for one reason: they have just completely screwed up Undertaker's character. This match, and more importantly the smoke from the urn being the source of Taker's power reminded me of the Midi-Chlorians from Phantom Menace. You don't explain the Force. You just know what it is and what it's capable of, but you never question it.

That's why Taker worked so well. We just knew he had powers and abilities, but by trying to explain them or show what they were was just a waste of time. This was insane and just didn't work at all. Taker would be out for about 7 months until LESLIE FREAKING NIELSEN was brought in to "solve" the case in a horrible comedy bit at Summerslam. Yeah, Vince really didn't have a freaking clue how Taker's character worked. This was horrible. Oh and the "match" sucked too.

Savage says he'll win the Rumble and get Crush.

Jarrett says he'll win too.

Tatanka says there's no friends and he'll win.

Diesel says he's going to Mania. Well I'd hope so. I'd hate for Vince to keep his own employees from going.

Doink is excited.

Shawn says he'll be the new champion at Mania.

Luger says this is his big chance.

Vince and DiBiase says anything can happen and keep talking about Taker.

Royal Rumble

After Howard goes over the rules, we're ready to go. Oh and it's 90 seconds this year instead of 2 minutes. Number one is Scott Steiner and he gets Samu of the Headshrinkers. What a coincidence AGAIN! They punch the heck out of each other and again, the idiocy of power vs. power is shown. Also considering this is Samu this isn't going to go well at all. The clock is sponsored now. I give up.

Rick is #3, so shockingly a team has gotten almost consecutive numbers. How do people not catch this time after time? As the Casio clock, so at least it's a watch company, gets us to zero, Kwang is 4th. He's more commonly known as Savio Vega in case you've never heard of him. As he comes out, Samu misses a cross body and gets his head caught between the top and middle ropes to be eliminated soon after.

Kwang hits the Muta mist to Rick to get it to one on one. DiBiase points out how easy it would be to just have the Steiners beat on everyone as they came at them which is true, but what does he know? Vince says Rick is smarting from the mist still. I think he said that so that it can be said that Rick is smart for the only time in his career. Scott is rocking the Triforce on his singlet so if nothing else he looks cool.

Owen Hart is fifth to some HUGE boos. He takes out the visually impaired Rick without much trouble and the double team on Scott begins until Bart Gunn is in at 6th. This is going too fast. Apparently something has happened in the back. Well it's good to know that everyone isn't just sitting around doing nothing. Diesel comes in at 7 to apparently clear out some of these guys.

At this time he's just a body guard with zero character to him at all. In about 40 seconds he drops all four guys and we have Backlund in at 8 and it's one on one. Well at least we have something close to a story going here with the dominant giant. He hits the ring and starts crawling on his stomach. It looks dumb at first but DiBiase does his job and points out that Bob is going after Diesel's legs.

People on Raw and Smackdown: PAY ATTENTION! That is what an analyst is supposed to do. He explained something that might have been a bit confusing otherwise and he's got the resume and experience to be believable. See what I mean? It looked a bit odd, so the analyst said what's going on. That wasn't complicated at all, but some clarification is always a good thing. They can do more than make stupid jokes you know.

Bob actually gets Diesel close to out but just can't do it which is fine. A few seconds later Diesel is on his own again, which for some reason surprises DiBiase. And Ted, you haven't been in every Rumble. You've been at them all, just not in them all. Get your facts straight.

Billy Gunn is next, and apparently you can find out the order of the wrestlers by calling the WWF Hotline. WOW. Ok, where to begin with why that's stupid. #1, it ruins the mystique of knowing who is in the match. 2, that's the first time we've heard about that all night long so nice job of advertising. 3, who in the world thought that was a good idea? Never mind, it's a Vince McMahon show and there's money to be made. All is explained.

Anyway, mullet man is victim #6 of Big D, lasting maybe 15 seconds. What's up with the way he punches? It's like he hits people with the wrist. We see a clip from earlier to Tenryu and Kabuki jumping Luger in the back. Yeah you can tell it's been a dominant performance if we have time for a segment during the match. The power of Shane Stevens stops them though.

Virgil is #10 as an alternate for Kamala and despite DiBiase laughing hysterically over it, Diesel drops him in about a minute. Wow we're already a third done with this. We have a story here though so I'm very proud. This is a new approach to the match that really is working. Also we don't have to worry about the ring filling up with jobbers. Ah here we go: Randy Savage is number 11 and he hammers the big man.

See this is a smart way of doing the Rumble: they had all those guys like the Gunns and Virgil and Kwang that weren't going to mean a stupid thing and got them in and out so the bigger names can be around later on. That's very smart and it gives you a bonus of making Diesel look amazing. I've always been a bit surprised that DiBiase and Savage's feud from 88 was really never mentioned on WWF TV after it ended.

There was never any mention of them having any issues or of DiBiase main eventing a Wrestlemania or anything like that. It's like it was forgotten, and it's not like DiBiase is on bad terms with the company or something like that as far as I know. He's made a ton of appearances over the years yet you never hear about it. Anyway, Jarrett is 12th as I have visions of WCW dancing in my head.

I kind of liked the Jarrett story of using wrestling as a springboard to country music. That's very original if nothing else. Savage takes him out with relative ease so we're back to him and Diesel again. It's Crush to a huge reaction from the audience. He and Savage were in the middle of a mega feud at this point which was just purely awesome. For the life of me I don't get why Crush never got a huge push.

Him against Hart would have been very interesting at least to me. Doink comes in because I guess there wasn't enough stupid comedy to meet the quota. Savage is gone and we're at two monsters against a clown. He actually is smart though as he just watches the big men fight. He actually sprays water from a flower and steps on their toes. Thankfully they wake up and

beat the tar out of him as Bigelow comes in at fifteen.

This is going really fast but there's a bit of a flow to it here and it's not as bad as I expected it to be. Bigelow puts Doink out with the same thing he did to I think Spike Dudley in ECW, which had just started to be booked by Heyman two months prior to this show.

Since he's an idiot, Crush hits Diesel when they have Bigelow an inch away from being out. Mabel is 16th as the smallest person out there is Crush as 6'9 and about 310lbs. Diesel goes right for him as I'm digging this planning of the Rumble. There's been distinct segments here and that's a major plus. And here's Bob Holly to screw that up. He's subbing for 1-2-3 Kid. WOW that's not a good way either way.

WE ARE LIVE! WE GET IT ALREADY VINCE! What's the freaking point in showing wide shots of the crowd and saying how live we are? I didn't buy this PPV to be shown the audience. I bought it for the matches, so quit showing big wide shots of the stupid crowd and emphasizing that you're live. It means jack and no one cares but you. WOW how many things could that be said about that he's come up with?

Shawn is in at 18. All of the big guys get on Diesel and Shawn gives the final shove to put him out. That gets no reaction at all. He gets some applause on his way out though, and you can hear the wheels turning in Vince's mind. Mo, the most worthless wrestler of all time is in next. Greg Valentine (seriously???) is in at 20 to a decent pop (seriously???). 21 is Tatanka to a short but loud pop.

To recap, we've got Crush, Bigelow, Mabel, Holly, Shawn, Mo, Valentine and Tatanka in there at the moment. Kabuki is in next as someone else that no one knows. A bunch of people jump Mabel and he's out, which surprises Vince for no apparent reason. Luger sprints out with apparently no damage at all to him from the earlier attack and naturally goes straight after

Kabuki, and there he goes.

In a STUNING, yes STUNNING I say, turn of events, Tenryu is next at 24. The buzzer rings for 25 but no one comes out, which was apparently Bret Hart. To recap, we have Crush, Bigelow, Holly, Michaels, Mo, Valentine, Tatanka, Luger and Tenryu. Luger and Michaels could have been an interesting feud. Martel, more commonly known as he who will not go away, is 26th and it amazes me that we're this close to being done.

At 27, in the words of Vince, IT'S BRET HART!!! He's limping badly so of course everyone goes for his knee. He's barely in there when Fatu is out at 28. We've got WAY too many people in there at the moment with something like 11 or so. A ton of people get together to eliminate Crush as Marty Jannetty comes in and goes right for Shawn. Now, since we have 10 guys in the ring, what's the best thing to do? Why, go to the back to hear from Crush!!!

Yep, they actually cut from the ring to Ray Rougeau in the back with Crush for an interview. Savage jumps him and they brawl. This would have been stupid if it went on for 20 seconds, but it lasts over a minute! Also you can see Adam Bomb clearly standing there getting ready to come out so it also gives away #30. We get back to the ring and apparently nothing has happened, but geez how freaking stupid was that? They hate each other, we get it already.

Ok, so with Bomb, who Vince says will win the Rumble, gives us a final group of Bomb, Bigelow, Holly, Shawn, Mo, Valentine, Tatanka, Luger, Tenryu, Martel, Fatu and Jannetty. Oh and they figure out that the guy that didn't show was Bastian Booger.

Bret and Shawn eliminate Holly. They work very well together. I hope those two do more in the future. With such great teamwork they could really do some great things. Ok bad jokes are mostly over as we have 11 people left. Dang that's just too many at the end. Bret Hart beats on Mo which has to be the

highlight of Mo's career. Bret is limping everywhere, so he wins salesman of the year already. Valentine is out.

They're just kind of mulling around at this point. Martel is out by Tatanka. Bomb is out as we've rapidly picked up the pace. Mo is out and gets no recognition by name. I love that. Bam Bam just throws Tatanka out like a jobber. Are these guys all double parked or something? Bigelow does a Flair Flip and goes out by Luger. Jannetty goes out and we're down to five with Luger, Hart, Tenryu, Michaels and Fatu. Hart and Luger get rid of Tenryu to take us down to four.

Bret and Shawn go at it, as I'm completely unstunned. Shawn and Fatu go out on stereo backdrops and we've got Luger vs. Bret. They go right at it and dump each other out at the same time. Both men are announced as the winner individually and since Hart gets a bigger pop I guess he wins.

They're named co-winners, even though later on we would see video where Luger clearly hit the ground first. Tunney comes out and makes the official co-winner decision. This led to a coin toss where the winner would get the first title shot at Mania and the other guy had to fight someone "of an equal level", which led to Bret vs. Owen. Had Bret won the toss, Luger would have fought Crush.

No matter what, the person that didn't get the shot would get the title shot later in the night against whoever had the belt after the first title match. I like that system a lot better than the triple threat which wasn't around in the WWF yet. Granted that could be because we've seen so many triple threats that they've lost their luster. Anyway, that ends our show.

Rating: B. This was a good Rumble. I was quite surprised that the intervals worked as well as they did here, since the shorter ones usually don't work that well. This had a lot of segments in it and you could tell that it was well planned.

92's was better simply because of star power, but this is easily the 2nd best so far.

I really liked this match and it did a lot of good things, including advancing stories and making you interested in seeing how they would fix the issues brought up in the match. That to me makes it a success. It's not great, but it's very good.

Overall Rating: B. This was a mostly solid show. If you factor out the Taker/Yoko debacle this is an instant A. Razor vs. IRS is probably the weakest match but it works very well and certainly isn't bad at all. The Rumble itself is a good one and the tag titles is must see stuff.

You factor in all those things and this was a very good show. There's more here than just the Rumble, but that's the centerpiece. Overall definitely a good show and well worth checking out, as long as you're not a diehard Taker fan because you might want to shoot your TV.