

Wrestlemania Count-Up – #2: The Inbred Cousin Of Wrestlemania

Wrestlemania 2

Date: April 7, 1986

Location: Nassau Coliseum-New York, Rosemont Horizon-Chicago, Illinois, Sports Arena-Los Angeles, California

Attendance: 40,085 combined for all three venues

Commentators: New York – Vince McMahon, Susan St. James. Chicago – Gorilla Monsoon, Gene Okerlund, Cathy Lee Crosby, Ernie Ladd. Los Angeles – Jesse Ventura, Alfred Hayes, Elvira America The Beautiful: Ray Charles

This show is the classic what the heck were thinking moment from the WWF. They had made Wrestlemania the year before and they hit it so far out of the park that by the time it was Wrestlemania 2 the ball hadn't come down yet. This was a problem though. Since the inaugural show had been such a success, Vince felt they had to do something to top it. This was his idea: what if we did Wrestlemania from 3 different places??? Think about that for a minute. How weird would that be?

Not to mention, Vince had another idea: let's put it on a Monday! Again, just awkward sounding. The format used was three locations, each with an undercard and then a featured match, which were a boxing match, a battle royal, and the true main event, Hulk Hogan against King Kong Bundy in a steel cage.

The idea was odd on paper and worse in reality as it felt like watching three shows instead of one. There's no rhythm and because it was in three locations, announcers were a rare commodity. Due to this, Vince's last idea was to put a real

commentator together with celebrities to do the commentary. What followed might be the biggest mess in company history.

Paul Orndorff vs. Don Muraco

We begin the show in New York City with Paul Orndorff against Don Muraco. Why are they fighting? I don't have a freaking clue but they are so here we go. As they begin we hear comments from both and neither have anything to say of meaning.

Orndorff is easily the face here so if he never accomplished anything else in his career, the face turn between Manias one and two was effective. As was predicted, the celebrity commentator is atrocious, with such gems like "I think he's winning!" Orndorff controls the early part of the match but Muraco breaks it up with some power. They roll outside and we get a double count out as the crowd clearly can be heard chanting bull.

Rating: D+. Fine for what it was, but the fans got it right with their chants. This is the opening match to Wrestlemania? Seriously? That's the best they could come up with? This feud more or less never went anywhere at all as Orndorff was about to get the biggest push of his career by far, resulting in him making about \$20,000 a week for awhile. This was just an odd choice for an opening match but then again this was an odd choice for a show so I guess it fits.

Intercontinental Title: George Steele vs. Randy Savage

Next up the intercontinental title is on the line as Randy Savage defends against George Steele. This is a match that I can't find a standalone version of so I can't put this one in here. However, this was another chapter in the over year long feud between these two. Savage had been allegedly mistreating Liz and Steele had developed a crush on her. That led to, what else, Savage being jealous and a 15 month feud began.

Mega stall from Savage to start as he seems afraid of Steele. Savage runs again and finally on the third time Steele goes after him. They finally lock up and Steele beats Savage up for a while with power moves and biting but Steele keeps going to talk to Liz. This was a weird period for Savage as they knew they had a gem with him but they didn't know what to do with him. Yeah he was the IC champion, but where did they go with him from there?

This was all they had until the next year when he and Steamboat stole the show and Savage was launched into the main event. For some reason Savage has a bouquet of flowers that he and Steele try to beat each other up with. After ripping apart a turnbuckle and eating the stuffing (not making that up) Steele gets slammed and elbowed, but he kicks out?

Yes, George Steele is the first man to kick out of the elbow, and he pops up, beats on Savage some more and then gets rolled up and Savage uses the ropes to pin him. Steele eats more stuffing.

Rating: C-. This was a comedy match I think with wrestling mixed in. Savage is the highlight here as he sells like crazy for Steele and it helps a lot. These two had this freaky chemistry that no one has ever been able to really figure out. They would feud on and off for the next year before FINALLY ending it with the return of Ricky Steamboat for that whole greatest match of all time thing he and Savage would have next year.

Jake Roberts vs. George Wells

We follow up that strange match with another somewhat strange match as Jake Roberts, still a rookie here, takes on some guy named George Wells. This match is little more than a glorified squash. Wells dominates early but doesn't go for a pin when he has the chance. Jake recovers and DDTs him to win the match. Afterwards he unleashes Damien who causes Wells to look like

he's foaming at the mouth.

Rating: D+. Talk about a weird choice to have on Wrestlemania. Jake was brand new at this point so they needed someone to make him look good and they pick...George Wells? There was a squash on Mania for the first two years and both times they were the least interesting match on the card. I don't get the selection here for the most part and it's pretty bad all things considered.

Boxing Match: Mr. T vs. Roddy Piper

We now move onto the main event of the New York portion of the show: a boxing match with Roddy Piper and Mr. T. This was built up on SNME about 2 months before hand with Mr. T. beating Piper's friend Bob Orton in a boxing match before being beaten down by both of them. That came on from what started over a year ago in the main event of the first Wrestlemania, so this truly was a showdown that had been built up for ages.

Factor in that T had been the World Boxing Champion in Rocky 3 just a few years ago and was on a top rated TV show where he was a tough guy. Both men have famous trainers in their corners to make it look more legit. For no apparent reason Joan Rivers does the ring announcing. This is ten three minute rounds. She introduces Orton as the Ace Comedy Bob Orvin. Nice job of handling the reading thing honey.

They actually got Smoking Joe Frazier to be in T's corner. One of the biggest stars in Hollywood has in his corner a former world heavyweight champion who had three of the best boxing matches in history with Muhammad Ali. He also has a midget. Well of course he does. They treat this like a real boxing match. Oh dear.

T goes for the ribs which doesn't work all that well for him. Piper hits him on the break which is illegal of course. There has been no mention of judges or anything like that so I guess

this is destined to not go the distance. The referee has broken them up about four times now. I think these are three minute rounds. For the most part these punches aren't landing at all but they sell them anyway of course.

It's not so much boxing but rather glorified grappling with the occasional punch thrown. The fans are more or less dead if you didn't guess that. After the first round nothing has really happened. Piper has a bunch of grease on his face for the second round which is keeping the punches from T from being effective.

This is painfully boring if I didn't make that clear so far. Piper knocks the heck out of T with some big roundhouses and finally drops him to huge cheers because something HAPPENED for a change. The knockdown gets a count of 8. Piper keeps pounding on him as round two ends. They brawl a bit during the break and Orton throws water at T.

Piper does the Ali Shuffle to start the third round. T gets him into the corner and pounds away with more or less open hand shots to the head and Piper is in trouble. That gets a count of 7. T gets a huge punch that I think hit so of course Piper is knocked to the floor. He gets up at 9 and then holds onto T for the last 25 seconds of the fight.

They just trade big bombs to start the fourth round. And then he punches the referee and slams T for the DQ about a minute into the fourth round. It's a bit brawl and T of course gets the win. Was there a reason for both that ending and also having Piper dominate a round like that? This was awful.

Rating: F. On WRESTLEmania they had a long boxing match. This was just boring beyond belief and the boxing looked awful. They tried to make this seem legit and it failed on more than all levels. T was never seen again and Piper turned face relatively soon after taking time off for knee surgery. Boring match and awful beyond belief.

Chicago

Women's Title: Fabulous Moolah vs. Velvet McIntyre

We start with the Women's Title on the line as Moolah defends against Velvet McIntyre. This match is just weird. Moolah dominates, Velvet comes back and then misses a splash allowing Moolah to pin her. It screams botched finish to me as even the announcers seem surprised.

Rating: N/A. Just was nothing at all and might have gone a minute. Little to rate here so I won't even try to.

Nikolai Volkoff vs. Corporal Kirschner

Now we have a flag match with Nikolai Volkoff against the forgotten Corporal Kirschner. Yeah I don't remember him either. The winner gets to have their flag waved. Other than that it's a standard one on one match. As usual, Nikolai sings the Russian National Anthem before the match starts. Nikolai dominates early on, ramming Kirschner into the post twice and busting him open. I kid you not, Kirschner lands 7 right hands, catches Freddy Blassie's cane and hits Nikolai with it to win the match.

Rating: D-. This was supposed to be a brawl but it was a bad match. 7 punches and a cane shot? Give me a break. Kirschner is apparently one of the most legit tough guys in the history of the business and got thrown out of most major companies for being too rough. Based on this and his match at the Wrestling Classic I'd assume it's due to a high level of suck but that's just me. This was just barely long enough to warrant a rating and it wasn't any good at all.

Battle Royal

Now we get the most famous match from this show: a 20 man battle royal with ten pro football players and 10 wrestlers. This is going to go GREAT. Since most of you won't know half

the people in this I'm not going to list them all until the end. The big names are a still rookie Bret Hart, Andre the Giant, Big John Studd and Bruno Sammartino. For the most part this is a run of the mill battle royal.

It's little more than a bunch of punching and kicking against the ropes as we get down to the big names. Oddly enough the celebrity commentator is the only one that gets anything right. Gorilla says stuff like Studd has this guy in the corner when they're almost in the middle of the ring, or Ernie Ladd who was a wrestler saying no one wants Andre when he's beating someone up. Amazing.

The only really famous thing in this match is a football player named William the Refrigerator Perry getting eliminated by Studd but then offering a handshake and eliminating him. The Iron Sheik eliminates Hillbilly Jim just as he would in the gimmick battle royal 15 years later at WM 17. The final four are the Hart Foundation, a football player and Andre. Do I need to really give the details on this? Andre beats up the Harts to win the match after launching Bret out in a press slam.

Rating: B. It's a bunch of football players and 80s wrestlers with a few great workers. Nothing special, but considering what they had to work with this is just fine. The football stuff didn't lead anywhere which is kind of surprising as they set up a Fridge vs. Studd thing that never happened at all that I know of. This was just ok and at least the right guy won it. Andre would of course be in the biggest match of all time the next year.

Tag Titles: British Bulldogs vs. The Dream Team

Now we have what is likely the best match of the whole show. It's a classic 80s tag match with the British Bulldogs, and Ozzy Osbourne in their corner for God alone knows why to face the tag team champions of the Dream Team Brutus Beefcake and

Greg Valentine. You can tell they're serious here as this has a sixty minute time limit.

The ring looks small here for some reason. Gorilla asks why Ozzy is there too which means he's confused like I am. There are two referees here which I doubt will mean anything for the most part. Smith vs. Valentine to get up. The ring is all loud here still.

The Bulldogs were so fast with those tags and this is no exception at all. Valentine won't tag out for no apparent reason. He counters a backdrop though and here's Beefcake. Small package by Dynamite get two. Fisherman's suplex by Davey gets two. I guess he's not perfect. After Davey gets beaten on for a bit Dynamite comes in and slugs it out with Valentine.

The champions cheat a bit and they still can't take over. I never got the appeal of the Dream Team but to be fair it might be that Brutus was just awful at this point. Valentine gets a Piledriver on Dynamite but falls forward so it kind of looks like a tombstone but with Dynamite's stomach facing out. That was kind of cool looking.

Bulldogs clear the ring as things speed up a bit. Davey gets the powerslam for two as it wasn't a finisher but just a signature move at the time. The champions work over Davey as momentum changes hands a lot here tonight. They work over the arm, including with a shoulderbreaker from Valentine.

However he shows his idiocy by pulling Davey up at two. Nice job you lunkhead. And there's the idiocy coming through as for no apparent reason Dynamite gets on the middle rope and Davey rams Valentine's head into Kid's for the knockout shot and falls on Valentine for the pin and the titles. That ending came from NOWHERE and Dynamite is out cold from the shot which is kind of amusing for some reason. That's Albano's 16th title win as a manager. Hokey smoke.

Rating: B-. Fun stuff but the ending was just so freaking random. I don't get the ending as it was like they looked at the clock and realized they had no time left and were like oh crap we need to finish this. The Bulldogs were a good team and were a huge step up from the Dream Team. They would lose them to the Harts in about 8-9 months so the tag division was starting to roll at this point.

Los Angeles

Ricky Steamboat vs. Hercules Hernandez

We move to the final and by far the worst of the three locations as we're now in LA, beginning with Ricky Steamboat against Hercules Hernandez. This was supposed to be Bret vs. Ricky in the big showdown match for Mania. I'm not sure what the showdown would be for since for all intents and purposes they had no feud that I know of but a little face on face action never hurt anyone, even though Bret wasn't a face at the time so scratch that line.

They start off kind of fast but not fast enough for anything to mean much. This was a different era so matches like these were really commonplace. There's no feud or anything here and Hercules is just a big power guy that had been given a fairly decent push so he's getting to fight one of the best guys in the company at one of the biggest shows of the year.

There is almost nothing to say here though as I've been watching for a few minutes and nothing has happened at all. Well at least nothing worth talking about that is. Hercules goes for the backbreaker as this is before the Full Nelson made him the original Chris Masters. Relatively standard Steamboat match which means it's at least passable. Herc is the big powerhouse that beats the tar out of Ricky, makes one mistake and the Dragon makes his comeback. The flying body press ends things as always.

Rating: C-. And that's almost all for Steamboat. I liked

Hercules for some reason but for the life of me I don't get the point in having him be considered a better prospect than Bret was. This was the epitome of a throwaway match with nothing special at all going on in it and nothing of note to talk about really. I sat there for minutes at a time with nothing of note so I apologize for the most history based match here.

Adrian Adonis vs. Uncle Elmer

Now for the odd match of the night, we have Adrian Adonis, playing a controversial gay gimmick at the time, against Uncle Elmer, a fat hillbilly character. The crowd chants a certain homosexual slur at Adonis to start the match which he prances around the ring to.

This match is slow and mostly painful as the smaller man in the match weighs about 350lbs. When he's your agile guy, you know this isn't going anywhere. Elmer punches him and literally falls off his feet from it. Quite sad actually. Adonis has his dress, yes dress ripped off and it's just hideous. Elmer beats on him some more but misses a leg drop. Adonis hits a top rope headbutt and gets the pin.

Rating: N/A. I never got the appeal of either of these characters and thankfully Elmer wasn't around much longer. Naturally he got a tape mainly about him and his family because that's the way the 80s went.

Junkyard Dog/Tito Santana vs. The Funks

In the next to last match of the night, we have the Funks against JYD and Tito Santana. This is another filler match that had no point at all other than two faces against a heel team. This is a much slower paced match as they do more old school stuff in there. Terry vs. Tito starts us off so we're certainly getting things started off on the right foot here.

You have three guys that belong in the Hall of Fame and JYD

who is in there because he was popular in the 80s making him a LEGEND. I still don't like him but he's more bearable than some people I can't stand. This is definitely a different style than most are used to. I'd like a bit more explanation as to why they're fighting but I think It's 1986 is about as close as we're going to get. Tito dominates for the most part here, hammering away on both Funks. He was completely awesome at this point if you didn't get that.

Off to the Dog now and we get some boxing. A Texas man lost a fight to a dog. Don't bother going back to Amarillo I guess Terry. Someone please explain the appeal to me of the Dog as I just don't get it at all and never have. Dory plays Ricky Morton which just sounds wrong and gets beaten on in the corner for a bit. The forearm gets two as I guess Tito didn't have it perfected yet.

Control shifts over to the crazy men and they beat down Tito for awhile as he's really playing Ricky Morton. That still sounds wrong. After a few minutes of basic offense from the Funks JYD comes back in and everything goes nuts. Terry is thrown to the floor where there are no mats. He might have legitimately hurt his knee or ankle there and I'm not surprised at all. With the referee not looking, Terry clocks the Dog with the Megaphone (Jimmy was managing them which I forgot to mention) and the heels steal one.

Rating: B-. Pretty fun match here with the Funks being all evil and the thrown together face team doing whatever they could to get the win. Granted that didn't happen but at least they tried. This was a better match than I remember it being and while it's still mainly formula stuff it worked rather well. I liked it and granted three of the guys being all time greats helps a bit.

WWF World Title: Hulk Hogan vs. King Kong Bundy

This is a cage match and the only one in Mania history if you

don't count the Cell match at Mania 15 which most people don't. The story behind this is Bundy jumped Hogan at a SNME and hurt his ribs, which hadn't healed yet. Hogan wrestled against doctor's orders with tape all over his ribs. Simple but effective but kind of too simple as this was more or less thrown together about a month ago.

This is a very not surprising match with Bundy going for the ribs and Hogan having to fight through the pain. It's solid because it's Hogan doing what he does best but the total and complete lack of drama or anyone really caring for the most part is hurting it. Also having Jesse as lead announcer is a very odd choice.

Bundy rips the tape off of Hogan's ribs like a good heel and Hogan messes up as always by trying to pick Bundy up and of course he can't do it. There's nothing special going on here at all but it's working for the most part. Ah there's the Hulk Up. Very surprisingly we get a power slam here and not the traditional slam. Maybe his ribs really were hurt. He ties up Bundy and goes over the top to retain and end the show.

Rating: B-. It's Hogan against a monster heel not named Andre. What are you expecting here? This was his bread and butter and the fans popped for the end (only) so I guess you can call this a success. I'm a sucker for Hogan matches in the 80s so I'd say there's probably some bias in the rating but who cares? Fairly solid match but nothing unique about it at all other than the cage aspect.

Overall rating: D+. While certainly better in the ring than the first Mania and including some storylines this time, the three venues thing is just a mess. There's really only two or three very good matches here and I'd call maybe the tag title match Mania worthy. Other than that there's a lot of filler and it's more or less 1-2 big matches per location with the rest being all filler.

This show suffers from trying to do something that had never been done before, and while they did indeed do that the overlooked one major point: the new thing they did wasn't a good idea. It's really not that good of a show overall. Watch the highlights if you want to, but don't waste three hours watching it from start to end.

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