

Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XIV: The Austin Era Has Begun

Wrestlemania XIV

Date: March 29, 1998

Location: Boston Garden, Boston, Massachusetts

Attendance: 19,028

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

This is what you call a changing of the guard show. For the last six months or so it's been clear that Austin is ready for to be on the top of the mountain and tonight he ascends to the peak. Shawn Michaels is world champion but he has a broken back thanks to hitting his back on a casket thanks to the Undertaker. The main draw of the show though is Mike Tyson as the guest referee. I can't emphasize enough how huge that was for WWF. Other than that we've got Kane vs. Undertaker in a battle of the monster brothers. This is a huge show to say the least. Let's get to it.

Chris Warren of the DX Band sings an unnecessary rock/metal version of the Star Spangled Banner/America the Beautiful. Thankfully this is booed out of the building.

The opening video is about tradition and the new generation that has arrived here tonight. Tyson and DX are featured along with Austin, even though they're fighting tonight. Even though they're fighting tonight, they're fighting over the same belt that Hogan and Andre fought over. That's a great point actually.

Tag Team Battle Royal

Los Boricuas (Vega/Perez), Los Boricuas (Estrada/Castillo), Truth Commission (Recon/Sniper), Bradshaw/Chainz, Nation of Domination (Brown/Henry), Nation of Domination (Faarooq/Mustafa), Legion of Doom 2000, Quebecers, Rock N Roll Express, Headbangers, Too Much, Disciples of Apocalypse, Steve Blackman/Flash Funk, Godwinns, New Midnight Express

This is the format of if one member is eliminated then both are out and the winners get a title shot at sometime in the future. LOD returns as the fifteenth team with Sunny as their new (mouth watering) manager. It's a big brawl to start because there are thirty people in the ring at once. One of the Boricuas is on the floor and is either hurt or is tying his shoe. It's Savio and he's helping his partner to the back.

The Truth Commission is out as Cornette and Sunny get in an argument. Barry Windham comes out and eliminates Chainz to tick off Bradshaw. Brown and the Quebecers are out as this is clearing out fast. The other Nation team is done too and there goes the Rock N Roll Express. The Headbangers are out and Mark Henry is still in despite his partner being gone. Ok now Henry is out and there goes Taylor to eliminate Too Much. We've still got the LOD, the Godwinns, the Midnights and the DOA. You can actually see the mat now.

The fans are completely behind the LOD as you would expect. Apparently the title match will be next month at Unforgiven. Things slow WAY down as Hawk runs over Henry Godwinn. The bikers (D.O.A.) are gone but they come back in to eliminate the Godwinns for fun. That leaves the returning L.O.D. against Bombastic Bob Holly and Bodacious Bart Gunn. Do I need to draw you a picture here?

Actually I do as the Godwinns come back in and blast Hawk and Animal with metal buckets. Animal is knocked to the floor so Hawk has to fight them both off on his own. Since this is the NEW Midnight Express, that's about as hard as fighting off a paper bag. Animal comes back in and the Legion easily eliminates the Midnights to win.

Rating: D. As is the case with most battle royals with this many people in the ring, the majority of the match is spent clearing out the ring. Once we got down to a handful of teams left, it was clear who was going to win. That's fine though, especially when the team is this popular. The tag division SUCKED at this point so bringing the L.O.D. in wasn't the worst idea in the world.

CALL THE HOTLINE!

We get some clips of the events of Wrestlemania week in Boston, including

the DX Public Workout where Austin got tied up in the ropes and Shawn kissed his head. Regis Philbin rubbed Austin's head for some reason too.

Light Heavyweight Title: Taka Michinoku vs. Aguila

Taka is defending and is pretty much the only wrestler in the division worth anything due to WCW having every luchador and smaller Japanese guy of note under contract. Aguila is Spanish for eagle in case you're not familiar with El Espanol. He would later take his mask off and be called Essa Rios. No one would care about him though until he got a hot redheaded manager named Lita and then people only cared about her. They shake hands to start and we're ready to go.

Aguila hits a headscissors to start and a spin kick to send Taka to the floor. A HUGE moonsault press to the floor takes out Taka. Rios never was great but he had one of the most beautiful moonsaults you would ever see. They fight to the apron where Taka throws him back in then dropkicks him to the floor. There's a GREAT springboard dive to take Aguila out as they're flying very high so far.

After a quick word from the Spanish announcers, Taka hits a low dropkick for two. Aguila comes back by throwing Taka out to the floor and armdragging the champion off the top rope as he comes back in. A springboard into another armdrag puts Taka down and there's the running up the corner wristlock that Sin Cara uses to send Taka to the floor. Aguila hits a corkscrew dive to take the champion out again and the stupid northeast crowd doesn't care. Well screw them because this is awesome so far.

Back in and Michinoku misses a corkscrew dive but Aguila hits a moonsault for two. Taka fights up and hits a smack to the face to put Aguila on his knees. A splash hits knees though and Aguila puts Michinoku back on the top. Aguila hits a big old rana off the top for no cover, allowing Taka to come back with a knee in the chest. A missile dropkick puts Aguila down as does a powerbomb, but Taka misses a moonsault. Aguila dives into a dropkick though and the Michinoku Driver retains the title.

Rating: B. This started VERY fast and while it was clear they got tired by the end, this was still great stuff. It's not quite

Mysterio/Guerrero/Psychosis level stuff but it beats anything else WWF was putting on with this division. Taka was the right choice for the inaugural champion, but he kept the title WAY too long and that's why the division died. Well among the other reasons I mentioned earlier.

Gennifer Flowers, some chick from the a Bill Clinton scandal, interviews the Rock. First off, what would you do if you were leader of this country Rock? "Well Genny, the term leader is a bit beneath the Rock. Let's go with.....ruler." Ok, so how would the Ruler handle the country's homeless situation? "Well it's like this: as long as the Rock still has his palace in Miami and those homeless pieces of trash keep their cardboard boxes off the Rock's freshly mowed grass, everything will be copacetic."

As for the judicial system, everything will be just fine as long as the people know he's the judge and the jury. After looking at Gennifer, he makes sure to point out it would be a hung jury, if you smell what he's cooking (there's a chance that's the debut of that line but I don't think it is). As for the White House, it's a tough job to run but as long as all the interns underneath the Rock don't do anything "orally" wrong, everything will be fine. This was HILARIOUS and one of the funniest promos Rock has ever had.

European Title: HHH vs. Owen Hart

HHH gets played to the ring by the DX Band and is defending here. This would be about four months after Owen returned as the only remaining Hart and attacked Shawn, but we couldn't have Owen vs. Shawn on PPV so let's feed Owen to HHH instead. Chyna is handcuffed to the worst authority figure ever, Sgt. Slaughter, during this match. Owen has a bad ankle coming in thanks to an attack by HHH.

The brawl is on to start and HHH is backdropped down quickly. Hart fires away right hands in the corner and a standing rana gets two. Owen is sent to the floor but Chyna can't interfere. HHH tries to dive at the Canadian but hits the barricade instead, keeping the advantage in Owen's favor. Back in and he loads up the Sharpshooter but HHH pokes him in the eye. There's a facebuster and a clothesline to put Owen down and HHH finally gets a breather.

The high knee gets two for the champion as does a knee drop. Are you noticing a pattern with this offense? Back up and Owen charges into a boot in the corner but HHH hits a DDT to break Owen's momentum and get a two count at the same time. HHH finally starts going after the bad ankle as Lawler cackles. Owen is bleeding from the bridge of his nose as HHH takes him down again.

There's another leg hold as Jerry is very happy to see a Hart in pain. HHH stomps on the bad ankle as the nose is busted even worse now. Owen comes back with some right hands before dropping down in the corner and crotching HHH ala Mr. Perfect. A missile dropkick gets two for the challenger as does a spinwheel kick. There's the enziguri to put HHH down but Owen can't follow up.

Hart eventually gets two as we get about our third loudly called spot of the match. HHH powerbombs Owen to counter a rana for two of his own. Owen goes up top and hits a cross body for two more. A Pedigree and Sharpshooter attempt are both blocked but Owen falls face first on HHH's crotch for two. Another Pedigree attempt is countered and the Sharpshooter goes on in the middle of the ring.

Chyna, despite being handcuffed to the commissioner, manages to pull HHH to the ropes. See? I told you Slaughter was really bad at his job. There's some powder in Slaughter's face which allows Chyna to hit Owen low. The Pedigree retains the title for HHH as Slaughter continues to be incompetent.

Rating: D+. The match was watchable but not much more than that. HHH going over was questionable but he would become the new leader of DX the next night so maybe there was something to it. Also, it's not like Owen wasn't used to getting jobbed out anyway. Slaughter was laughably bad at his job so at least we had that to laugh at.

Chyna decks Slaughter post match.

Buy the new Austin shirt! Oh don't worry: A LOT of people did that.

We recap Mero/Sable against Goldust/Luna. This was a weird feud as Mero had been a total jerk to Sable for months as he thought she was hogging

the spotlight. Then Luna and Goldie went after her so for about a week, Mero was the gallant hero standing up for her honor.

The Artist Formerly Known As Goldust/Luna Vachon vs. Marc Mero/Sable

The guys start things off with Mero hitting a fast headscissors and a clothesline. Off to the women folk but Luna wants to fight Mero. She gets Sable instead and Luna runs away instead of fighting. We get a lap around the ring and the men come back in before we get any contact. Goldie gets backdropped by Mero and kicked in the ribs by Sable for good measure. Luna won't tag in so it's back to Mero so that the genitals match.

Mero pounds away on Goldust in the corner but gets clotheslined down to change control. A quick cross body gets two for Marc but Goldust hits an uppercut to put him right back down. The fans chant for Sable as the men collide. A double tag brings in the girls and Sable spears Luna down. She pounds away and kicks Luna in the corner before bealing her across the ring.

Sable pounds on Goldust as well but it's back to Mero who doesn't fare as well. With Sable trying to get back in, Mero hits Goldust low but can't hit the TKO. Instead Goldust counters into a DDT for two but he can't hook the Curtain Call. Mero hits a running knee lift and a moonsault press for two. Goldust goes up but gets crotched, setting up a top rope rana by Mero for two.

Marc threatens to hit Luna and ducks just in time to make the heels collide. The TKO on Goldust gets two more as Luna makes the save. Sable tags herself in and covers Goldust but has to avoid a splash from Luna. A Sable Bomb gets two on Luna and she's back up in seconds. Not that it matters as the TKO (it's a cutter out of a fireman's carry) from Sable ends Luna a few seconds later.

Rating: C. This was WAY better than I was expecting it to be. The saddest part of this match though was what happened after: in the back Sable had praise heaped onto her while Luna was basically ignored. Sable could barely do anything in the ring while Luna was a seasoned veteran who received no credit for her work with Sable. Only Owen Hart congratulated her on her success. That's rather sad when you think about it.

Jeff Jarrett brings out Gennifer Flowers to be at ring announcer for the next match.

Intercontinental Title: The Rock vs. Ken Shamrock

This is just after the debut of the new name for Rocky Maivia and he's defending. He's also in the Nation of Domination. Flowers isn't very good at this but she's trying at least. A few weeks ago on Raw, Shamrock was beating up D'Lo Brown but Rock came out for the save. He hit Shamrock in the head with a chair shot that would get John Cena fired today. He also hit Faarooq, the leader of the Nation, in the head "by mistake. I'm sure.

Shamrock immediately attacks to start and Rocky is in trouble. A clothesline puts the champion on the floor and Rock tries to walk out. Shamrock sends him into the barricade but has to stop the count, allowing Rock to get in some shots of his own. Apparently if Rock gets disqualified he loses the title. Back in and a kick to the chin puts the champion down and Shamrock rams Rock's head into the mat a few times.

Back to the floor again, this time with Shamrock going into the steps to give Rock his first extended advantage. There's the yet to be named People's Elbow for two but Shamrock throws Rock out to the floor again. Ken gets a chair but stops to shove the referee down, allowing Rock to get the chair and CRACK Shamrock's head with it. That gets two and there's a powerslam by Shamrock. The ankle lock changes the title out of nowhere.

Rating: C-. This was too fast paced to work that well but Shamrock's insanity worked really well here. Rocky would move on to the feud that launched him to the stars against HHH soon after this while Shamrock would fight various people until heading to the Corporation late in the year. Decent match but too short to mean much.

Post match Shamrock goes after Rock even more but here's the Nation. Shamrock easily suplexes Henry down and puts Rock back in the ankle lock. This brings out Faarooq who won't get in the ring to help his Nation teammate Rock. Shamrock keeps the ankle lock on Rock for a bit before finally letting it go. Instead he beats up referees, which causes the original referee to reverse his decision and give Rock the title back.

Gah with the Dusty Finishes. With nothing to lose, Shamrock destroys Rock even more and holds up the title.

Tag Titles: New Age Outlaws vs. Cactus Jack/Chainsaw Charlie

This is a dumpster match which is a casket match with a dumpster. The Outlaws are defending because two months ago they put Cactus and Funk (Charlie is Terry Funk) in a dumpster and shoved it off the stage. Billy and Roadie are about 24 hours from joining DX so they're not quite what they would become yet. It's a brawl to start (were you expecting anything else?) and there's a dumpster at ringside to put a team inside.

Cactus and Roadie trade shots to the head as Billy chokes Funk. Jack tries to charge off the apron at Roadie but gets sent into the side of the dumpster instead. Funk goes into the barricade as the champions are controlling early on. They backdrop Terry into the dumpster but he escapes before Jack can be put inside with him. That's fine with the Outlaws as they drape both challengers over the edge of the dumpster and slam the lids over the backs of both guys.

Both challengers are put back inside but Jack grabs stereo Mandible Claws to stop the Outlaws' momentum. We head back inside and Road Dogg gets caught by some neckbreakers before Jack and Billy head to the floor again. The Cactus Elbow with a cookie sheet crushes Gunn and it's ladder time. Back in and Cactus goes up on top of the ladder along with Billy, onto to have Terry knocked into the ladder, sending both guys on top of it into the dumpster. Cactus climbs out as Terry is powerbombed into the dumpster.

The three remaining people fight into the back and Cactus is rammed into various metal objects. Now he goes into some large (as in 6'0) bottles of Surge and Powerade but Cactus comes back with double arm DDT onto a forklift. Funk pops back in and raises the Outlaws up on the forklift and drops them in another dumpster for the titles.

Rating: C. This was a garbage match (literally) but it was a fun brawl and the good guys got their revenge on the guys that injured them in the first place. What more can you ask for from a match like this, which was the third biggest on the card? Later it would be decided that the title

change didn't count because that was the wrong dumpster, leading to a cage rematch the next night with the Outlaws regaining the belts and joining DX.

Unforgiven is in Greensboro, North Carolina.

We recap Kane vs. Undertaker. This dates back to last summer, when Bearer claimed that Undertaker burned down his parents' funeral home, burning his brother Kane to death. One night Undertaker was beating up Paul Bearer but Bearer claimed that Undertaker's brother was alive. At Bad Blood, Kane interfered in the first Hell in a Cell match and cost Taker the match, much to Undertaker's shock. Kane wanted to fight Taker but the Dead Man kept saying no. Kane went on a path of destruction throughout the company but Taker wouldn't fight him.

Undertaker got a title shot at the Rumble and a week before the show, the brothers seemed to bond. Then at the Rumble itself, Kane turned on his brother and locked him in a casket, which was then set on fire. A few weeks later, Undertaker came back and said he would fight Kane at Wrestlemania. This led to a moment I've always loved as Taker was on top of the Titantron and sent a bolt of lightning down at a casket, lighting it on fire. It fell apart, revealing a Kane mannequin inside which burned to end Raw. This is a HUGE deal and almost the co main event.

Here's Pete Rose to be ring announcer. After getting a warm reception, Pete turns heel on the audience and rips on them for losing for so long. Pete sounds a bit drunk here but not too bad. He makes fun of the Red Sox and there go the lights, cuing Kane. We debut a three year long running joke of Kane beating up Pete, this time with a Tombstone, sending the crowd into delirium. There go the lights and it's time for the mother of all Undertaker entrances. Druids come out carrying torches and we hear music that sounds like Gregorian chanting. Undertaker walks out under a tunnel of fire and we're ready to go. AWESOME.

Undertaker vs. Kane

There's the bell and they stare each other down before Taker pounds away with no effect. Kane shrugs them off and LAUNCHES Undertaker into the corner but Taker is too quick. Kane comes back with a clothesline but

Taker immediately sits up. A tombstone doesn't work for Kane so he puts Taker in the Tree of Woe and stomps away. This is only Kane's second match in the company to date so we don't have a lot to go on with him.

A clothesline in the corner puts Undertaker down again as Bearer talks trash. Kane draps him over the top rope and there's a forearm to the back of the head. Back in and Kane pounds away in the corner but Undertaker covers up. Taker gets a running start at Kane and winds up on the red one's shoulders, only to be (kind of) slammed face first into the mat. They head to the floor with Taker being dropped face first onto the barricade. A Paul Bearer distraction lets Kane drop the steps onto his brother's back.

Paul gets in some stomps before Kane suplexes Taker back in. Taker says bring it on and hits a few clotheslines, only to charge into a chokeslam for two as Kane pulls his brother up. We hit the chinlock for over a full minute before Undertaker fights up with punches to the ribs. A back elbow puts him back down though and an elbow drop sets up another chinlock by Kane. Taker fights out of that one as well, only to try to crotch Kane on the top rope. That doesn't quite work though as Kane bounces on the top rope and falls to the floor.

Instead here's a Taker Dive but Kane throws him through the Spanish Announce Table in a spectacular crash. Back in and the top rope clothesline gets two for Kane and Bearer is shocked. Taker loads up a Tombstone out of nowhere but gets countered into one by his brother but it only gets two. Kane is TICKED so they slug it out with Taker getting the better of it.

A clothesline puts Kane down and there's a chokeslam by Undertaker. The Tombstone hits Kane but it only gets two. You can hear the fans gasp at the kickout. There's another Tombstone but THAT just gets two so Taker goes up for a top rope clothesline. The third Tombstone FINALLY ends it, even though Kane would have been up at 3.1.

Rating: C-. I've heard this called terrible and yeah it's bad, but it's definitely not horrible. They would have been better suited cutting out about two minutes but even without that missing this was still a solid

power match. It was clear they were getting winded by the end, but this is one of the matches where the crowd carried things. There's nothing wrong with that and it worked well here. Nowhere near as bad as I remembered it.

Post match Kane lays out Undertaker again, blasting him with a chair a few times. A tombstone on the chair leaves Taker out cold.

We recap Austin vs. Michaels. Austin was the hottest thing in the history of ever and it was a matter of time until he won the world title. Mike Tyson was brought in to referee the main event and joined DX to desperately convince people that Austin had a prayer's chance of losing here. Austin's neck is basically being held together by tape while Michaels' back isn't that lucky, so expect a lot of easy brawling here.

WWF World Title: Shawn Michaels vs. Steve Austin

We get the always awesome shot of the guys walking from the back to the ring. Mike Tyson is guest enforcer on the floor and there's a regular referee in the ring. JR: "Folks, it don't get no bigger than this." They circle each other to start and there's a double bird for HBK. Shawn pops him with a left hand and does it again a few seconds later. The champion runs away but gets caught back inside as Austin pounds away and pulls Shawn's tights down to give the girls a thrill.

A backdrop puts Shawn on the floor but HHH gets in a shot to Austin's back. He sends Austin into the barricade which gets both him and Chyna ejected. Austin beats up HHH in the aisle but it lets Michaels get in a shot to take over. Shawn sends Austin into the dumpster shoulder first and we head back to the ring. The challenger comes back with right hands and there's a Flair Flip which must feel like murder for Shawn.

The Stunner is countered as Shawn bails to the apron, only to get knocked onto the still standing announce table. Back in and the Austin elbow gets two and we hit the chinlock so Shawn can get his back pain down to only pure agony. Back up and Shawn hits a jawbreaker to give himself a breather. Shawn heads to the floor and it's clear he can barely move. He tries to wrap Austin's leg around the post but gets pulled face first into it instead.

Shawn comes back with a backdrop to put Austin into the crowd and there's a bell shot for good measure. Back in and Shawn lays in some right hands but he can barely move other than that. The fans chant Holyfield to tick off Tyson for no apparent reason. More punching by Shawn but he can't even bend over to pick up Austin's legs. Austin comes back with a double leg trip and rapid fire punches to Shawn's face before sending Michaels back to the floor.

This time though the tripping up works and Austin's leg is wrapped around the post. It gets wrapped a few more times and we head back inside for some basic leg work. A figure four is countered and Austin kicks him shoulder first into the post. Shawn comes right back with another shot to the knee though before cannonballing down onto it for good measure. A chop block puts Steve down and there's a very ginger figure four by the champion. After Shawn cheats any way he can, Austin turns the hold over to escape.

Michaels gets caught in a slingshot to send him into the post for two but he comes back with a sleeper. The referee gets crushed in the corner as Shawn is dropped face first onto the buckle again. Austin sends him into the corner and stomps a mudhole but Shawn comes back with the flying forearm. Michaels nips up to blow my mind before dropping the big elbow. He tunes up the band but Austin ducks. The Stunner doesn't work but neither does another superkick attempt. The Stunner hits, Tyson slides in for the pin and Austin claims his destiny.

Rating: B+. Considering how messed up the two of them were, this was nothing short of a miracle. Shawn was literally wrestling with a broken back and Austin's neck was close enough that you could say it was broken too. This was a great match and a great way to send Austin to the top of the company, as he beats the previous top guy and the torch is passed. At this point, no one thought Shawn would ever wrestle again so this was a great way to go out. This match is also the definition of "match where everyone and their mother knew what was going to happen and it was the 100% correct call".

We get the famous line from JR of "The Austin Era has begun!" as Austin gets the belt for the first time. He poses on the ropes in another famous

visual before handing Tyson an Austin shirt. Shawn is ticked off at Tyson and gets in his face so Tyson lays him out with a right hand (JR: "TYSON! TYSON! TYSON! RIGHT HAND! DOWN GOES MICHAELS!"). Massive celebrating ends the show.

Overall Rating: B. This is a pretty solid show and a good example of a shot that doesn't fit with the individual parts that it had if that makes sense. The main event is by far the best, but this was much more about atmosphere and buildup. The good guys went over in every major match and only the Rock match had a screwy finish. Tonight's show was about giving the fans what they were supposed to get and sometimes that's the right move. This show finally launched WWF over the hump and put them on top in the Monday Night Wars, where they would basically stay forever (minus about six weeks in the fall

Ratings Comparison

Tag Team Battle Royal

Original: D-

Redo: D

Taka Michinoku vs. Aguila

Original: D+

Redo: B

HHH vs. Owen Hart

Original: B-

Redo: D+

Marc Mero/Sable vs. The Artist Formerly Known As Goldust/Luna Vachon

Original: C

Redo: C

The Rock vs. Ken Shamrock

Original: C+

Redo: C-

New Age Outlaws vs. Cactus Jack/Chainsaw Charlie

Original: C+

Redo: C

Kane vs. Undertaker

Original: D+

Redo: C-

Steve Austin vs. Shawn Michaels

Original: B+

Redo: B+

Overall Rating

Original: B+

Redo: B

I have no idea what I was thinking on the second and third matches.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/21/history-of-wrestlemania-with-kb-wrestlemania-14-everything-changes-forever/>

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