

Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XXIII: Shawn Is Better Than HHH

Wrestlemania XXIII

Date: April 1, 2007

Location: Ford Field, Detroit, Michigan

Attendance: 80,103

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole, Tazz, John Bradshaw Layfield, Joey Styles

To say this show was a success is an understatement. Until Rock vs. Cena, this show drew more PPV buys than any show in the history of the company, which says a lot when you consider what came before it. The main event here is Bobby Lashley vs. Umaga, which is the Battle of the Billionaires, as Donald Trump and Vince are backing the two respectively. The losing billionaire gets his head shaved. There's also Cena vs. Shawn in what should be awesome. Let's get to it.

The opening video is a montage of Wrestlemania logos which turns into your usual highlight reel.

We get a clip of the opening of Wrestlemania III before transitioning to Ford Field in the same city. Aretha Franklin is here again twenty years later to sing America the Beautiful again. That's a very nice touch, as are the clips from Tribute to the Troops.

Now we get the video for this year's show, which is the All Grown Up theme. It's a bunch of kids dressed like the stars who then turn into their adult selves.

Mr. Kennedy vs. CM Punk vs. Randy Orton vs. Finlay vs. Matt Hardy vs. King Booker vs. Jeff Hardy vs. Edge

With this match, we start the tradition of having too many people in a single MITB match and overcrowding the thing. Everyone looks up at the

case until Kennedy goes to get a ladder. Orton heads to the floor to stop him as the big brawl begins. Finlay DIVES on everyone not named Edge, allowing the Canadian to make a climb, only to be stopped by Matt. They head to the floor, allowing Orton and Finlay to head up top for a brawl on the ladder.

They topple to the floor so it's Jeff going up, only to be shoved down by Kennedy. Booker goes to pull out a ladder but it's Horny's, meaning it's only about two feet tall. Punk takes it away and pounds on people with it, only to have Edge take over again. This is one of those matches that moves too fast to really keep track of things. Punk is bleeding from the forehead as Edge bridges a ladder between the ring and barricade.

Back inside and Booker takes over with kicks and spinebusters for everyone in sight. Before climbing though, here's a Spinarooni. The distraction lets the Hardys crush Booker with some ladders before Matt and Edge go at it a bit. The Hardys set up a ladder seesaw but Jeff is sent off the top to break up whatever they were going to do to Edge. Instead Edge suplexes Matt onto the ladder, only to be sent to the floor by Kennedy.

Kennedy pounds away on Matt but the Kenton Bomb only hits ladder. Instead it's Jeff with a Swanton to Mr. before the brothers team up to drop everyone in sight with the ladder. Both Hardys go up and start slugging it out on top of the ladder, only to be shoved into the top rope by Finlay. Edge hits the spear on Finlay and one for Orton and Booker as well. Kennedy and Matt take spears too and there's one for Jeff to nearly complete the set. Punk jumps over Edge to send him into the corner and become the only man standing.

Punk puts the ladder around his head and spins around a bit to take everyone out until Edge thinks wisely and DUCKS, allowing him to take out Punk's vulnerable ribs. Edge gets the big ladder and makes a climb, only to gets caught by Orton and shoved down to the floor. Jeff saves that though and climbs up on his own as Matt puts Edge on the ladder between the ring and the barricade. Jeff dives off the ladder THROUGH EDGE AND THROUGH THE LADDER! Needless to say, Edge and Jeff are DONE.

We're down to six people in the match now and it's Orton's turn to take over with RKOs all around. He picks up a regular sized ladder but Punk knocks him down and sets up a second ladder in the middle of the ring. Apparently Jeff is still on the floor despite Edge being taken out. Orton and Punk both climb up and it's an RKO off the top of the ladder to end Punk. Booker goes up but has to stop an RKO attempt with a Bookend off the ladder.

It's Matt vs. Booker on the ladder but Matt drops down and threatens to give Sharmell the Twist of Fate, drawing Booker down. There's the Twist to the King but Finlay (sporting a NASTY cut on the back of his head) shoves the ladder over. The Celtic Cross (White Noise) crushes Matt against the ladder but hurts Finlay's back in the process. Finlay is barely able to stand so here's Horny to climb for him.

Instead though Kennedy pops up the ladder...and gets smacked in the face by Horny. There's a fireman's carry roll off the ladder for the little guy's efforts. Finlay destroys Kennedy with the ladder but gets knocked off the ladder by Matt. Now it's Punk going up but Kennedy meets him on the ladder for a slugout. Punk shoves him off but Kennedy spears him in the ribs with another ladder, allowing Kennedy to climb up and win the case.

Rating: B. This was definitely the weakest of the matches so far as there were too many people in there and no one to have the big spots like Shelton. It's definitely good but this one lacked the pop that most of these matches had over the years. Kennedy would lose the case to Edge a few weeks later.

Video on the premiere of The Condemned so we can clear the ring out.

Kennedy warns every champion that he's coming for them and says he's Mr. Money in the Bank. Bank.

Batista is All Grown Up.

Great Khali vs. Kane

This is when Khali is still a decent monster who could move a little bit.

Kane is easily shoved down to start and then shoved to the floor for good measure. Back in and Kane slugs Khali, only to be chopped right back down. Off to the nerve hold before Khali slugs away in the corner. Kane comes back with punches of his own but is easily shoved down and across the ring.

Kane fires back with a right hand and tries the top rope clothesline but it only staggers Khali. Another shot sends Khali into the ropes and Kane has his opening. Kane heads to the floor and grabs a chain with a hook on the end which he used in the horror movie he was in around this time. Khali knocks him back and rips off the turnbuckle pad to distract the referee, allowing Kane to kick him low. In one of the big spots of the show, Kane slams Khali ala Hogan slamming Andre twenty years ago. That only gets two so they both grab chokeslams, but it's Khali hitting the Punjabi Plunge for the one footed pin.

Rating: D-. The slam was cool and the rest was completely horrible. Khali was nothing good and somehow he would get even worse. Kane was in that weird period for him where he was just kind of there and doing nothing of note. By period, I mean about a five year stretch of course. Terrible match but the slam was good.

Post match Khali chokes him out with the chain and no one makes the save.

The Divas say they're All Grown Up. The idea of taking them seriously is amusing.

Cryme Tyme tries to cheer up a now bald Eugene with an Extreme Expose dance party. That would be Kelly, Layla and Brooke (now Tessmacher) as a dance troupe. Instead Moolah and Mae Young show up and Eugene wants to dance with them. Cue REVEREND SLICK of all people to show us how it's done. This brings in Dusty Rhodes who says you can't have a dance party without him. The music comes back on and here are Sgt. Slaughter, Jimmy Hart and IRS to join in. Ricky Steamboat in full karate attire shows up until we get the Ron Simmons payoff.

Some Detroit Tigers are here.

US Title: MVP vs. Chris Benoit

Benoit is defending and MVP is pretty new here. They head to the mat to start with MVP actually in control. Off to a headlock by the challenger but he has to shove Benoit to the floor to avoid the Crossface. Back in and Benoit can't hook the Crossface as MVP keeps it on the mat with the headlocks. Back up and MVP pounds Benoit into the corner but charges into an elbow. A superplex attempt is blocked and Benoit's arm is draped across the top rope to shift momentum again.

Back in and MVP works over the bad arm with some driving shoulder blocks. He misses a spinning kick though and Benoit busts out the Rolling Germans. The Swan Dive is broken up though and MVP goes back to the arm by sending it into the post. Off to an armbar again, followed by a running clothesline for two. Out of nowhere Benoit reverses a slam into a Crossface attempt but the arm is too weak to hook the hold. This time the slam works and there's the Ballin elbow for two. MVP misses a charge into the corner and it's time to roll some Germans. After four of those, Benoit hits the Swan Dive to retain.

Rating: C. Yeah that's it. The match really never got off the ground and could have used another four minutes or so. As always the scariest part is thinking that Benoit only had about two months left so he likely wasn't sane during this match. The match itself wasn't bad but as mentioned it never got off the ground. MVP would win the title at Backlash and hold it for almost a year.

Video on Undertaker who is All Grown Up...I think.

Donald Trump is in his dressing room and complaining about the lack of food and drinks backstage. Boogeyman comes in for no apparent reason and Trump doesn't seem impressed. Trump asks him for a sandwich. This uh...happened. Yeah we'll go with that.

Hall of Fame time. Mr. Perfect was one of the headliners here and gets a pretty touching tribute. William Shatner inducted Lawler, which is kind of annoying as Lawler had wanted Lance Russell (announcer of Memphis Wrestling for like forty years) to do it but WWE said no and picked Shatner because of a forgotten segment on Raw back in like 1995. The other headliner was Dusty Rhodes who asked to be made an honorary

Horseman. That's just wrong. No presentation to the crowd here which is weird.

The attendance is over 80,000, which is of course a new record.

Here's the Fink because what would Wrestlemania be without him? Oh ok he's doing the Hall of Fame live presentation to the crowd. JR gets easily the biggest pop of the entire class.

82% of the fans think Undertaker will win the title.

We recap Undertaker vs. Batista but there isn't much to say. Taker won the Rumble and picked Batista for an awesome power match. They had to team up at No Way Out and Batista turned on him to give us a one night only heel, even though that's not really too far out of Batista's normal behavior.

Smackdown World Title: Batista vs. Undertaker

Teddy Long does the intros here for some reason. We also get the druids and the torches, which look AWESOME in the huge stadiums like this. The bell rings and Batista spears Taker down before pounding away in the corner. Undertaker fires off right hands of his own but Batista throws him right back into the corner. The fans are totally behind Undertaker here. They head to the floor with Undertaker being sent knees first into the steps as is his custom.

Back in and Batista hits a top rope shoulder for two. If you're listening to Cole, you would think he had hit a 450. A big clothesline puts Taker down for two but Undertaker comes back with right hands and a running charge in the corner. The Snake Eyes and big boot combo puts Batista down and a legdrop gets two. Old School connects but Big Dave powers out of the chokeslam to huge booing.

The jumping clothesline puts Batista down again but only for two. Taker puts him on the apron for the elbow and legdrops before busting out the Taker Dive as is his custom at Wrestlemania. Taker pounds away even more but Batista counters to throw him through part of the barricade to take over. With Undertaker dazed, Batista loads up a powerslam from one

announce table through the other, which actually isn't countered.

Back in and that only gets two so the champion pounds away more for good measure. Batista loads up the Bomb but Taker plows him into the corner to counter. Dave comes right back with a belly to belly suplex for two. He pounds on Taker in the corner like a schmuck and of course there's the Last Ride for two. Taker has a breather but walks right into the spinebuster.

Batista doesn't cover though and gets caught in a chokeslam for a VERY close two. The Tombstone is countered and Batista hits the spear and Batista Bomb for an even closer two, shocking the champion. Batista loads up another Bomb but Taker backdrops out of it and avoids a spear, setting up the Tombstone for the title.

Rating: A. The idea is that these two were annoyed and decided to have an awesome match to show everyone up. These two would go on to have more great matches on shows where Batista actually had a chance to win. This was the feud of the year and it's hard to argue as they could both work the power game like few others.

Lashley is All Grown Up.

Vince is in the back looking in a mirror when Stephanie comes in with a stroller. Vince goes off on Stephanie before playing with his granddaughter. Naturally there's a camera from inside the stroller looking up at Vince. He promises to fracture Trump's skull.

Joey tries to talk about the ECW Originals vs. the New Breed but we need to get this along.

New Breed vs. ECW Originals

It's Elijah Burke/Matt Striker/Kevin Thron/Marcus Cor Van vs. Rob Van Dam/Tommy Dreamer/Sabu and for no reason whatsoever this is a regular eight man tag instead of the Extreme Rules match we would get on ECW a few days later. Striker starts with Sabu and Matt is in early trouble. It's quickly off to Sandman vs. Burke but before Sandy does much he brings in Dreamer. Cor Von hits Dreamer in the back and comes in to pound

away a bit.

It's quickly back to Burke (the New Breed's leader and more famous as D'Angelo Dinero) for the running knees to the back for two. Thorn comes in to crush Dreamer into the corner and put on a chinlock. Back up and a sitout powerbomb gets two for Thorn and here's Cor Von again. Burke comes in as well but Dreamer takes them down with a simultaneous neckbreaker/reverse DDT combo. The hot tag brings in Van Dam and there's the top rope kick to Thorn. Rolling Thunder lands on Striker as everything breaks down. With everyone else on the floor, Van Dam Five Stars Striker for the pin.

Rating: D+. Seriously, why wasn't this the Extreme Rules match? The whole point of ECW is to be extreme but we got a seven minute tag match which went nowhere at all. The theory was to finally let these guys get on Wrestlemania, but Van Dam had been on it before and won a title here. Nothing to see here at all.

Austin is All Grown Up.

Wrestlemania 24 is in Orlando.

We recap the real main event for tonight's show and the reason why this show was the highest drawing show ever for the next five years. Vince and Donald Trump both agreed to back a guy into a match and the losing billionaire would get their head shaved. This was when Trump was still a big deal and EVERYONE was backing Umaga because they wanted to see Trump bald. Oh except for Rock who actually cut a promo about wanting to see Vince bald.

Trump picked the ECW World Champion Bobby Lashley. Steve Austin was brought in to referee because this is Wrestlemania. The best part of the build was Lashley in a cage with Umaga on the floor. To escape, Lashley shoulder blocked the cage wall, knocking it down to the floor and nearly crushing Umaga in the process.

Bobby Lashley vs. Umaga

The barber's chair gets its own entrance complete with some snappy music.

Oh and Umaga is IC Champion. Trump coming out to a song with the only word being MONEY is perfect. Real money rains down from the ceiling, including \$100 bills. To be fair this show brought in like 50 million dollars in PPV alone so they can afford a bit. They collide to start and slug it out with Lashley pounding him into the corner. Austin pulls Lashley off of Umaga since they're in the ropes and Umaga gets in some shots of his own. Lashley goes up to the middle rope for a shoulder for two.

Umaga's manager Armando Estrada is dragged in by Lashley and powerslammed down with ease. Lashley throws him out to the floor and low bridges Umaga to send him to the floor as well. Back in and Lashley misses a spear, sending him out to the floor this time. We head inside again and Umaga chokes away, only to be pulled off at four and a half by Austin. Austin has to do it again, this time by the hair for good measure.

A BIG clothesline puts Lashley down again and Umaga cannonballs down onto his chest for good measure. The Samoan drop puts Lashley down again as does a failed slam attempt. Vince gets up on the apron and gets dropped down by an elbow from Lashley, only to walk into a shot from Umaga to take over again. Umaga goes up and gets slammed down before being clotheslined down. Both guys down and Austin gets to nine before stopping so it doesn't end in a draw.

Shane McMahon comes out to check on Vince as Umaga hits an uppercut to drop Lashley again. Austin has to pull Umaga out of the corner, earning him a Samoan Spike. Shane comes in and pounds away on Lashley until Umaga is back into things. The running hip attack crushes Bobby's face and Vince throws in some trashcans. Shane hits the Coast to Coast to drive the can into Lashley's face. A top rope splash from Umaga crushes Lashley and Shane has a referee's shirt on now.

Austin breaks up the pin and beats up Shane for good measure, only to walk into another Samoan Spike. Trump isn't sure what to do and shows off those great acting skills of his. Vince comes over to taunt him and TRUMP CLOTHESLINES VINCE! Umaga tries another Spike on Austin but gets countered into the Stunner. The spear from Lashley connects and it's time for Vince to be bald.

Rating: D. This match sucked for the most part until Austin got going. The problem at the end of the day was no one on the planet with any idea what was going on here thought Vince was going to win. It also didn't help that no one cared about Lashley because no one had ever given us a reason to. He was just kind of there for the most part and there was nothing more to him than he used to be a college wrestler and he's muscular. Seriously, that's Lashley's story almost in full.

Post match they take FOREVER to Stun Vince and cut his hair. Austin Stuns him because that's what Austin does to Vince. To their credit though, they SHAVE his head, not just trim it. Vince's face during this whole thing is great as he goes from shock to the patented Vince rage in a few seconds. This led to three months of Vince/Shane/Umaga vs. Lashley which didn't work for the most part. Austin, Lashley and Trump share beers and Trump gets Stunned. I'll give the guy this: he has a soft spot for wrestling. He hosted two Wrestlemanias, was in the crowd for two more and did this.

John Cena is All Grown Up.

For no apparent reason other than we have nothing else to talk about, we look at the dark match with Flair/Carlito vs. Gregory Helms/Chavo Guerrero in a lumberjack match.

Womens Title: Melina vs. Ashley

It's a lumberjill match and all of the other Divas are introduced. Melina is defending here because thank goodness Ashley never got the title. Ashley, who isn't a wrestler, takes Melina down and pounds away. The crowd is audibly quiet for this match and can you blame them? Ashley pounds away in the corner and does some bad choking but Melina comes back by SCREAMING. Off to a bow and arrow for a bit as I have no interest in watching this match at all. Ashley misses an elbow and thankfully Melina reverses a rollup into one of her own to retain.

Rating: M. As in Mickie James, who was on the floor during this match instead of in the ring. Point blank, Ashley cannot wrestle. She was decent looking, but other than that she had nothing going for her at all. This was a popcorn break match and thankfully it was barely three minutes

long as I couldn't sit through much longer.

Shawn Michaels is All Grown Up.

We recap Michaels vs. Cena. Shawn won a triple threat to set this up and then won the tag titles with Cena. The idea is Shawn has turned on every one of his partners in his career and he'll do it again here. No music video here for some reason.

Raw World Title: John Cena vs. Shawn Michaels

Remember that they're tag champions here but neither guy wears the belt. I can't say I blame them of course. Cena's special entrance this year is driving a muscle car from "the parking lot" into the arena due to being in Detroit. They circle each other to start before Shawn slaps him in the face. A quick headlock doesn't do much for Shawn so he uses his speed advantage to pop John with some right hands. Back to the headlock and it works a bit better this time as Shawn takes Cena down to the mat.

Cena has had enough of this defense thing and rings Shawn's bell with a clothesline. Shawn is sent to the apron but he tosses Cena from the ring and out to the floor. A BIG chop staggers Cena but Shawn's Asai Moonsault hits mostly table and Shawn is hurt. Luckily for him though Cena is even more hurt as they head back inside. Shawn chops away in the corner before going after Cena's knee. The leg is wrapped around the post and Cena is in trouble. The referee asks Cena if he can continue and of course Cena says yes.

Shawn keeps kicking at the leg before wrapping it around the ring rope. With Cena down in the corner, Shawn stares straight at him to play even more mind games. Back up and John hits a big right hand to send Shawn flying across the ring. Shawn charges straight back at him with a shoulder into the ribs in the corner to keep control. Michaels charges again but Cena's leg gives out and Shawn goes head first into the post, busting him open.

Cena has had enough of getting beaten up so he punches Shawn down before firing off some mounted right hands. The ProtoBomb and Shuffle hit but Shawn punches his way out of the FU. Cena is sent into the corner but

manages to duck Sweet Chin Music. The referee isn't so lucky though and is knocked senseless. Cena tries the FU but is countered into a DDT to put both guys down.

With no referee in sight, Shawn rolls to the floor and hits a sick piledriver onto the steps. The THUD when Cena's head hit was a little scary. The back of Cena's head is cut open BAD on top of that. Back in and here's a second referee but the count only gets two. There are the forearm and nip-up as the blood flows down Shawn's face. The top rope elbow connects but Cena blocks Chin Music with a big clothesline to put both guys down again.

They slug it out in the middle of the ring but the FU is countered again into a sunset flip for two. Shawn's leap frog is caught in the FU but Cena is too banged up to cover. The very delayed cover gets two and the champ is getting frustrated. With nothing else to do he tries an FU off the top, only to be shoved off by Shawn. Michaels dives at Cena but gets caught in the FU position. He counters that as well though by landing on his feet, only to miss the superkick and have Cena try for the STFU. Cena keeps trying for it but gets small packaged down for two instead.

Shawn misses an enziguri attempt and now the STFU is on. Cena cranks back on it but Shawn is only a few inches away from the rope. As Shawn starts to black out he grabs the rope and Cena has to break. He takes a bit too long though and gets in an argument with the referee, allowing Shawn to kick Cena's head off. Another delayed cover gets two and both guys are down. In a cool spot, both guys have to lean on the other to get up. The FU is countered again but Shawn can't avoid the STFU again. Cena cranks back on it and Shawn has no choice but to tap out.

Rating: A-. This was a much better match than the HHH match from the year before for a few reasons. First of all, there was a story behind the match. As simple as it was, Shawn being Cena's partner gave them a bond and seeing them fight was something interesting to see. Second, the drama was better here. Cena felt like he was in real trouble and that the title was in danger, which I never felt last year. It's a better match overall and they would have even better ones in the future.

A highlight package ends the show.

Overall Rating: B+. This is a show where the stuff that is bad is really bad but the stuff that is good is REALLY good. There are only eight matches on the card and three of them are very good to great. The best part about that though is the bad matches (other than one) were all short and pretty easy to get through. The show is completely forgettable other than Trump vs. Vince and maybe Undertaker vs. Batista, but it's worth seeing. I would however recommend fast forwarding through some of the weaker parts.

Ratings Comparison

CM Punk vs. Mr. Kennedy vs. Finlay vs. Randy Orton vs. King Booker vs. Jeff Hardy vs. Booker T vs. Edge

Original: B+

Redo: B

Great Khali vs. Kane

Original: D

Redo: D-

Chris Benoit vs. MVP

Original: B

Redo: C

Undertaker vs. Batista

Original: B+

Redo: A

ECW Originals vs. New Breed

Original: D+

Redo: D

Bobby Lashley vs. Umaga

Original: C-

Redo: D

Melina vs. Ashley

Original: F

Redo: M (for Mickie James)

John Cena vs. Shawn Michaels

Original: A

Redo: A-

Overall Rating

Original: B

Redo: B+

Almost everything goes down and the rating goes up. I'm a complex guy sometimes.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/30/history-of-wrestlemania-with-kb-wrestlemania-23-over-80000-people/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book on the History of the WWE Championship from Amazon at: