

Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XXIV: The Underrated Classic

Wrestlemania XXIV

Date: March 30, 2008

Location: Citrus Bowl, Orlando, Florida

Attendance: 74,365

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole, Jonathan Coachman, Joey Styles, Tazz

We're going outside for the first time in a long time for this one. It's also the first time the show has been in Florida which is odd for some reason. Anyway the main events here are Undertaker challenging Edge for the title and Orton defending against HHH and Cena. As for HHH's life mate Shawn, he's facing Flair in what was pretty clearly going to be Flair's last match. Let's get to it.

John Legend sings America the Beautiful.

The set is awesome with palm trees everywhere and a big canopy.

As usual, the big names on tonight's show talk about how important this night is to them. It's a used formula, but it always works.

This transitions into a video about how so many things can change in a year. People can return, champions can fall and surprises can occur, but it all culminates here.

John Bradshaw Layfield vs. Finlay

This is a Belfast Brawl which means street fight. Finlay was revealed to be Hornswoggle's dad and JBL beat up the tiny man as a favor to Vince. Tonight it's about revenge. Horny comes out with Finlay to appeal to the kids. Finlay charges at the ring and gets drilled by a knee to the head. JBL pounds away on the floor but gets sent shoulder first into the steps. We head inside for the opening bell and Finlay slides right back out to

find some trashcans.

As he gets back in though JBL CRACKS him with a can and picks up some cookie sheets. Now the steps are brought in but JBL can't powerbomb Finlay onto them. Some cookie sheet shots to the head put JBL down for two but a big boot does the same to Finlay. JBL stops to yell at Horny, allowing for the shot with that Irish club that I can't spell. Since this is a WWE hardcore style match, it's table time.

The table is set up in the corner but Finlay picks up the steps instead. JBL bails to the floor and beats on Horny, only to be rammed into the announce table by Papa Horny for his efforts. A trashcan lid to the head stops Finlay and gets two back inside, allowing JBL to pick up a trashcan and LAUNCH IT at Horny. That looked great.

Speaking of trashcans, a shot to JBL breaks up the Clothesline and Finlay blasts him with a lid for good measure. JBL is sent through the table for two and the fans are pleased. Finlay picks up the steps but gets blasted in the knee by a kendo stick, allowing JBL to knock him out with the Clothesline for the pin.

Rating: C+. This was fine. The whole point of this was to have a power brawl with some basic weapons which is what we got. I'm really not sure on JBL winning as the fans were solidly behind Horny and Finlay, but at least the match was entertaining and there were some hard shots in there. Good stuff here.

Kim Kardashian is guest hostess. She wasn't famous for the most part yet here. Kennedy pops in and says he'll win MITB and Kardashian is a little disturbed. Well to be fair she disturbs a lot of people so everything is even.

CM Punk vs. Shelton Benjamin vs. John Morrison vs. Chris Jericho vs. MVP vs. Mr. Kennedy vs. Carlito

Morrison is a tag champion and MVP is US Champion, having held it for nearly a year. Jericho is also Intercontinental Champion because what else is he supposed to do? Everyone goes after a ladder to start other than MVP who stays in the ring. Someone slides one in and MVP uses it to

knock everyone down. Jericho brings in a big ladder and it's time for a duel. MVP goes down and here's Morrison to use his own ladder to send Jericho down.

In an awesome move, Morrison goes up top with the ladder and moonsaults down onto a bunch of guys at once. Kennedy uses the distraction to go up but Jericho makes the save. He tries a catapult on Kennedy but sends him onto the ladder by mistake. Morrison dives onto the ladder to stop Kennedy but Shelton climbs his own ladder to make it a three way race. Kennedy loads up a superplex on Morrison but Shelton jumps over both of them with a sunset flip to make it a Tower of Doom. Cool spot.

Carlito tries to shove Shelton off the ladder but he lands on the top rope on his feet. Shelton shoves the ladder at Carlito and tries to dive onto said ladder but it gives way. Punk stops Shelton from going up and hits the GTS but Kennedy stops him with the rolling fireman's carry onto a ladder. MVP is back in now to kick Kennedy in the head but gets sent into a ladder by Carlito.

Shelton's dragon whip CRACKS Carlito in the head but as he goes up, Kennedy and Carlito shove the ladder forward, sending Shelton over the top and through a ladder which was bridged between the ring and the barricade. Carlito and Kennedy go up but MVP breaks that up, only to be broken up by Morrison. Jericho breaks up Morrison's attempt by putting him in the Walls on top of the ladder. Again, awesome. Kennedy tries to use the opening but Jericho throws John down and starts brawling.

Punk and Carlito dive at the ladders to make it a fourway with only Jericho lasting on top. Carlito comes back with the Backstabber off the ladder and everyone is down again. MVP goes up the ladder but here's the returning Matt Hardy to stop him with a Twist of Fate off the ladder. Everyone is back in again and Jericho beats on all of them with the ladder. In a cool visual one ladder is jammed into the bottom of another, so as Morrison climbs the vertical (and unfolded) one, Jericho shoves it back into the corner and onto Punk.

Carlito and Jericho go up but Carlito spits apple in the face to break it up. Kennedy shoves Carlito off but gets hit in the ribs with a ladder by

Punk. Jericho hits a Codebreaker with a ladder onto Punk to put everyone not named Jericho down. Punk goes up to stop Jericho but gets hit in the face by the briefcase. Punk climbs up again and knocks Jericho into the Tree of Woe with a shot to the head, allowing Punk to climb up and win the briefcase.

Rating: B. Good MITB here but as usual the high amount of people hurt it. Nothing here really stood out other than the Walls and Matt's return, as you can only get so much out of the same spots we've seen before. It's certainly good but it's a step below some of the other stuff, and this would only get worse until we got some fresh blood in there. A power guy wouldn't hurt either.

Orton, HHH and Cena are ready.

We look at the Hall of Fame induction ceremony from last night. The big deal of this was having Rock back to induct Rocky Johnson and Peter Maivia, his father and grandfather. The headliner though was Ric Flair who of course had everyone in tears.

Fink comes out to do the live introductions of this year's class. They include the Brisco Brothers, Gordon Solie (represented by his kids), Johnson and Maivia, Eddie Graham, Mae Young (who tries to strip) and Flair (represented by his children, including Reid who died about three days before this was written).

Snoop Dog is here to emcee the Playboy match later and apparently has a friend in Festus. Heel Santino Marella comes up to say that he's going to be at the match later but Snoop rings the bell to send Festus into a rage. Mick Foley pops up for a cameo, complete with Snoop Sock.

Batista vs. Umaga

This is a Battle for Brand Supremacy with Batista on the blue team and Umaga on the red team. Seriously that's the whole story here. Regal and Teddy are here as GM's/motivators. Slugout to start followed by Umaga missing a charge into the corner. Batista sends him to the floor but once back inside Umaga takes Big Dave down with a spinwheel kick (decent one too). A big unbooted foot sends Batista to the floor and Umaga is in full

control.

Umaga gets nowhere off a quick nerve hold and gets even worse off a missed swan dive. Batista can't slam him down though and Umaga falls on top for two. A HARD kick to Batista's back sets up another nerve hold to keep things slow. Back up and Batista walks into a Samoan Drop for another near fall. They fight up again and Batista gets up a boot in the corner to slow Umaga down. After blocking the Samoan Spike, Batista hits a spinebuster and the "Batista Bomb" (read as Batista picks him up and falls backwards to send Umaga to the mat) for the pin.

Rating: D-. This was AWFUL with Batista doing nothing and being booed for most of his comeback. I can't say I blame the fans either as the match was just dull all around. How this makes Smackdown bigger than Raw is beyond me but that's what WWE says so who am I to argue? Match sucked.

We look at the tale of the tape for Big Show vs. Floyd Mayweather, the latter being about as tall as my grandmother.

We look at the battle royal from the preshow with Kane winning a shot at the ECW Title.

ECW Title: Kane vs. Chavo Guerrero

In less time than it takes to type "in less time than it takes to type", Kane chokeslams Chavo and pins him for the title. Match ran about 6 seconds.

Actress Raven Symone is here for some charity thing and SHOUTS ABOUT IT A LOT.

We recap Shawn vs. Flair. This was an odd build up as Vince said that the next match Flair lost would mean his retirement. This basically started Flair's retirement tour as he held onto the title in upset after upset until he was all of a sudden on a roll. This led to Flair challenging Mr. Wrestlemania Shawn Michaels to a showdown at Wrestlemania, because if Flair can't beat him he doesn't want to keep going.

Flair was inducted into the Hall of Fame and it was made as clear as possible that Flair was going down to Shawn in Orlando. This led to a

tear jerking video set to Leave the Memories Alone with a highlight reel of Flair's career. The idea is that Shawn doesn't want to do this but Flair wants Shawn to bring it.

Ric Flair vs. Shawn Michaels

Feeling out process to start with neither guy being able to get the advantage. A hip toss puts Shawn down and Ric shouts about being Old Yeller, which Shawn referenced to set this up. Shawn chops him hard and Flair's lip is bleeding. They slug it out in the corner with Shawn taking over and going up top, only to be slammed down. Now Flair goes up and hits a cross body for two. Jerry: "IT ACTUALLY WORKED!"

Ric goes after the knee but Shawn kicks him to the floor. Shawn loads up an Asai Moonsault and hits table, landing square on the edge ribs first. That looked HORRIBLE and Shawn is in big trouble. Back in and a belly to back suplex gets two for Flair. Naitch stays on the ribs and hits a good looking suplex for two. Shawn comes back with a backdrop to send Flair to the floor and follows up with a moonsault which mostly hits floor.

Both guys make it back inside at nine and they chop it out. The forearm and nippup connect and Shawn starts slugging away. A slam sets up Shawn's top rope elbow but it hurts his ribs in the process. Michaels tunes up the band but can't bring himself to do it, allowing Flair to grab the Figure Four which is quickly broken. They fight to the mat and try Flair's bridge up out of a pinfall into the backslide but Ric is just too old.

Instead it's a sunset flip for two for Shawn but Flair takes out the knee with a chop block. The Figure Four is countered into an inside cradle for two. NOW the Figure Four goes on in the middle of the ring but Shawn finally rolls it over into the ropes. Back up and Shawn hits the superkick out of nowhere but the cover only gets two. Shawn tunes up the band again but gets kicked low for two.

Michaels comes back with a reverse Figure Four but Flair manages to crawl to the ropes. A quick rollup with a handful of trunks gets two for Flair and he fires off chop after chop. Out of nowhere Shawn superkicks Flair down but Michaels can't cover. Flair slowly gets up and says bring it.

Shawn looks at him, says "I'm sorry. I love you." and superkicks Flair into retirement.

Rating: B. This is a hard one to grade. The match itself was entertaining, but it wasn't supposed to be a competitive spectacle. This was designed to give Flair a great match to go out on and they almost did that. They made no secret about who was winning and that's ok, but at the same time it was like delaying the inevitable. It was a good match to send him out on and the fans were happy to see the famous spots one more time.

Flair gets a well deserved standing ovation. This match should have closed the show and was going to, but Flair said no because the title match should close the show. Usually I would agree but in this case, Flair should have ended the show. Ric takes the long walk up the ramp to nonstop applause.

Edge talks about being a Hulkamaniac at Wrestlemania 6 and watching his hero losing. His innocence was lost that day but it's ok. His life has come full circle because people rely on Undertaker to win at Wrestlemania. Tonight he's taking everyone innocence by breaking the streak.

Maria/Ashley vs. Beth Phoenix/Melina

This is a Playboy lumberjill match with Snoop Dogg as master of ceremonies in a golf cart. Snoop of course comes out with all of the lumberjills because that's what Snoop would do. Ashley is her usual self and Maria looks great. Also, her theme song continues to be ridiculously catchy. Oh and Beth is Women's Champion and has Santino with her. Melina has uh...wings.

Ashley tries to fight Beth and is immediately thrown around. Maria tries a double hip toss with Ashley which goes as well as you would expect two talentless models to be able to do. Melina is thrown to the floor and beaten up by the good Divas and takes a bad Bronco Buster from Maria. Ashley gets a running start to climb to the middle ropes to punch Melina as this mess continues. Melina takes over and catapults Ashley into a bearhug by Beth.

Melina hits a moonsault off of Beth's shoulders for two before we get a stupid trip from Ashley. Off to Maria for some kicks as the lights go out. They finally get a spotlight on as this continues to fall apart. Maria tries to counter the Glam Slam into a bulldog but can't even do that right. Melina breaks up the pin and we get heel miscommunication. Maria hits a kind of top rope bulldog but Santino breaks up the pin. Lawler punches out Santino but Beth hits a fisherman's buster for the pin on Maria.

Rating: F+. That's ALL for Maria looking great. I forgot this match was a lumberjill match after about a minute and the rest of the girls couldn't even be seen after that long. Maria was TERRIBLE here and she was the better worker on her team. This didn't work at all and was the disaster to end all disasters for Divas matches.

Post match Snoop lays out Santino with a clothesline and makes out with Maria. I'll give him this: he seemed to be having a blast out there.

We recap Orton vs. HHH vs. Cena. Orton won the title by forfeit at No Mercy and Cena is back from injury to reclaim the title that he never lost. HHH won the Elimination Chamber to get a shot as well.

Raw World Title: Randy Orton vs. HHH vs. John Cena

Cena has a drumline playing him to the ring which is pretty awesome. After some big match intros we're ready to go. Orton immediately blasts HHH with the belt but Cena takes the champion down with a bulldog before Orton can do any more damage. HHH pops back up and throws both guys to the floor before sending Orton into the announce table. Orton and HHH head back in with the champion being put in a sleeper. Cena comes back in and picks them BOTH up at the same time for an FU but both guys slip off the back. Orton's backbreaker puts HHH down as does a shot to Cena to give the champion control again.

Randy takes turns pounding away on both guys, getting two off a knee drop to the Game. Orton starts getting uncharacteristic for himself by going up top, only to be stopped by Cena. John loads up a superplex but HHH pulls Cena onto his own shoulders so Orton can hit a top rope cross body for two. Cena stands up to try the FU on Orton but Randy slides into a

cradle for two. HHH clotheslines Cena down but Orton clotheslines HHH to put HHH down.

It's Orton standing tall again as he sends both guys to the apron for a double Elevated DDT which gets two on both challengers. An RKO to Cena is countered but he shoves Orton into HHH to put both guys down. Cena hits the Throwback (a flipping face first mat slam) and the top rope Fameasser to keep Randy down. He isn't down enough for the STFU though and the champion rolls to the floor. Cena follows him and is sent into the post to slow things down again.

Orton and HHH fight it out in the ring with HHH taking out the champion's knee. Cena comes back in to distract HHH but after the Game puts him down, Orton catches him with an RKO to put him right next to Cena. Orton kicks HHH to the floor but walks into the STFU in the middle of the ring. HHH makes a save at the last second and sends Cena into the floor to put him down on the floor.

Back in and HHH puts on an Indian Deathlock to follow up on the knee work he started earlier. Now it's Cena back in to break up the hold and send HHH into the corner and out to the floor. Back to the STFU but HHH comes in for the save. The problem is that the save didn't work, so HHH puts Cena in a Crossface while Cena has Orton in the STFU. Cena lets go of his hold but manages to crawl over to the ropes to break up the hold.

Orton rolls to the floor so HHH and Cena can slug it out in the middle of the ring. The fans boo Cena's punches and cheer HHH's, continuing a trend for whomever Cena is facing. Cena slams HHH down and hits the Shuffle but Cena's FU is countered into a Pedigree attempt which is countered into an STFU attempt this HHH escapes. The spinebuster puts John down and there's the Pedigree, but Orton comes back in with the Punt to HHH to knock him silly and Orton pins Cena to retain.

Rating: B. This was a fast paced match with all three guys working hard out there in front of a huge crowd. The back and forth stuff worked very well and it wasn't clear who was going to win until the match was over. Orton getting beaten up and winning while stealing HHH's pin is perfect for him, as well as giving him the big win on the big stage that he

needed.

We recap Big Show vs. Floyd Mayweather which is the big celebrity match of the night. Big Show was a bully to the much smaller Mayweather at No Way Out where Floyd legitimately broke Show's nose with a right hand, setting up tonight's No DQ match. The big question was who do we cheer for in this match? The bully or the guy who keeps running his mouth and brags about how no one can beat him? That question was never answered even after the match was over. Mayweather allegedly got \$20 million for this one match. He's a world champion boxer if you're not a fan of his.

Floyd Mayweather Jr. vs. Big Show

You can by pin, submission or knockout. Other than that anything goes. Floyd is in gloves which would seem to be a disadvantage for him but whatever. He bobs and weaves a lot before firing off some nice punches to Big Show. Mayweather stops for a drink from a chalice (seriously) and Show beats up Mayweather's team a bit. Show grabs an incoming punch and tries to stomp on Floyd's hand. Smart strategy.

Show lifts him up for a chokeslam but that lets Floyd get on even level with Show's head. Some rights to the face stagger show but Mayweather tries to choke him out, which actually works for a bit. Show finally flips him over and steps on Floyd's left hand. The guys on the floor FREAK and say that's not allowed before Show chops Mayweather in the corner. Show stands on Floyd's back before putting him down with a side slam.

A headbutt stops Floyd's comeback bid and there's an elbow drop for good measure. Mayweather tries to bail but Big Show chases the team down, beats them up, and throws Floyd back in the ring. Show loads up the chokeslam but a handler hits Show with a chair. He gets chokeslammed down but Mayweather gets the chair and blasts Show with it a few times. A low blow and three chair shots to the head sets up a brass knuckle right hand to Show's jaw for the knockout (and Show was on his knees at 9).

Rating: C+. This is one of those matches where all you can say is "well what else were you expecting?" Again though, who was I supposed to cheer for? The giant bully, or the loud bragging guy who used chairs and brass

knuckles to win? Like I said, the story was head scratch inducing, but this was tremendous fun.

Wrestlemania is coming back to Houston next year.

Kim Kardashian announces the new attendance record: 74,635.

We get a video on the Streak which is interrupted by Edge's theme music. Edge already beat Undertaker once by cashing in MITB last year and then costing him the title at Survivor Series. They're trying to play up Streak vs. streak here but Edge lost in MITB last year.

Smackdown World Title: Undertaker vs. Edge

Edge has Teddy wheel out Vickie who is in a wheelchair as always. The Canadian is defending here. The champ pounds away to start but gets clotheslined out to the floor. Back in and Taker comes back with a Stunner onto the top rope to put Edge down. Taker slugs away but charges into a boot in the corner, only to come back with the jumping clothesline for two. Old School is countered but Taker rolls forward and armdrags Edge down.

Edge sends Taker over the corner by avoiding a big boot, possibly injuring Taker's arm in the process. A spear sends Taker off the apron and into the barricade to work over the ribs a bit. Edge hits a hard baseball slide to send Taker back into the barricade as the match slows down a bit. With Undertaker on the apron, Edge hits a running neckbreaker to snap Undertaker's neck across the top rope.

Back in and Edge pounds away even more before hitting a spear into the corner for no cover. Instead it's a dropkick to put Taker down again and Edge goes up, only to be shoved down to the floor with a sick thud. There's the Taker Dive to continue the Wrestlemania tradition. Taker drops the apron legdrop and heads back inside for the Last Ride but his back won't let him use it.

They head outside again and Edge drops Taker back first onto the barricade, sending the big man into the crowd. Off to a half crab by Edge followed by a very modified Indian Deathlock which Undertaker kicks away.

Back up and they slug it out with Taker getting control and the cheers from Undertaker. The challenger gets the better of it and hits a running clothesline in the corner. Make it a pair of them followed by snake eyes but the big boot is blocked for two by Edge.

The chokeslam is countered into the Impaler DDT for two. The second chokeslam attempt works but it only gets a near fall as well. Old School is broken up again and Edge pounds away in the corner but has to counter the Last Ride out of the corner with a neckbreaker for two. These counters are getting awesome. The Last Ride (more of a regular powerbomb here) hits but it only gets two. Edge counters the Tombstone into the Edge-0-Matic for ANOTHER close two. The fans aren't buying Edge's near falls.

Back up and Taker's big boot hits the referee before Edge takes down the Dead Man. A low blow breaks up a chokeslam bid and Edge blasts Taker in the head with a camera. Taker sits up and like a dolt, Edge tries a Tombstone. Taker reverses into one of his own and here's another referee running a LONG way down the aisle to count two. Cue Hawkins and Ryder (as in Curt and Zack, the Edgeheads) to distract Taker and let Edge hit the spear for two. NOW the fans are fired up about the kickout. Another spear connects but Taker grabs the Hell's Gate submission out of nowhere and Edge taps away the title to make it 15-0.

Rating: A. I kept hearing about how great this match was and while I remember it being good, I don't remember it being this good. It's pretty safe to say that this is Edge's best non-gimmick match ever and it's one of his best ever period. Great match here and it would set up a series of solid gimmick matches between the two over the summer.

A lot of fireworks end the show.

Overall Rating: A-. There's some very good stuff on here along with some historic stuff to go with it. The bad stuff is mostly short and the main event was very solid and better than I remember. I don't know if I'd say it's one of the best ever but it's in the running for that list. Really fun show here which was better than I was expecting it to be.

Ratings Comparison

John Bradshaw Layfield vs. Finlay

Original: C+

Redo: C+

Shelton Benjamin vs. CM Punk vs. Carlito vs. Chris Jericho vs. MVP vs.
Mr. Kennedy vs. John Morrison

Original: B

Redo: B

Batista vs. Umaga

Original: F+

Redo: D-

Kane vs. Chavo Guerrero

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

Ric Flair vs. Shawn Michaels

Original: A

Redo: B

Beth Phoenix/Melina vs. Maria/Ashley

Original: F

Redo: F+

John Cena vs. HHH vs. Randy Orton

Original: C+

Redo: B

Floyd Mayweather vs. Big Show

Original: D-

Redo: C+

Edge vs. Undertaker

Original: A-

Redo: A

Overall Rating

Original: C-

Redo: A-

WOW I totally shortchanged this last time. It's a great show and I said a C-? What was I on?

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/31/583/>

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