

Summerslam Count-Up – 1988: The Most Famous Moment In The Show's History

We're finally at the final of the Big Four WWE shows with Summerslam. Back in 1987, it was clear that pay per view was a big deal for the company, so Survivor Series was added to the schedule. That show was a huge success as well, so why not add a third pay per view on top of it? The new show was Summerslam which made its debut in 1988. The show was coming off the very successful Wrestlemania IV with Randy Savage as the WWF Champion, meaning the company was firing on all cylinders. Over the next 25 days I'll be counting down the shows leading up to the 2013 edition. Let's get to it.

Summerslam 1988

Date: August 29, 1988

Location: Madison Square Garden, New York City, New York

Attendance: 20,000

Commentators: Gorilla Monsoon, Billy Graham

The main event here is Hogan/Savage vs. DiBiase/Andre in a match billed as Mega Powers vs. Mega Bucks. Allegedly the plan was to have Ric Flair jump from the NWA and challenge Savage for the title but Flair backed out, giving us the tag match instead. Other than that we have Honky Tonk Man defending his title against a mystery opponent and the Hart Foundation challenging Demolition for the tag titles. The card wasn't exactly stacked for this show. Let's get to it.

The opening video has what would become the Royal Rumble theme song set over shots of the four guys in the main event plus their managers, Virgil and Miss Elizabeth.

Fabulous Rougeaus vs. British Bulldogs

These two teams could not stand each other behind the scenes, eventually reaching the point where the Bulldogs left the company as a result. Davey

jumps Jacques to start and rams him into turnbuckle after turnbuckle to put him down. Smith throws Jacques over to Raymond for a tag in a nice display of bravado. Off to Dynamite for a quick headbutt and a slam to keep Raymond in trouble.

Off to an armbar by Dynamite Kid before Davey comes back in for one of his own. Dynamite comes back in with a wicked clothesline to take Raymond's head off. Chris Benoit idolized Dynamite and you can see so many of Benoit's moves when you watch Dynamite's matches. Davey comes in and trades some snappy rollups before it's back to Dynamite to continue cranking on the arm.

Davey comes in again but Jacques trips him up to shift control to the Canadians. It's off to some leg work now as Jacques kicks away at Davey's hamstring. The Rougeaus start tagging in and out with Ray coming in to drop some knees on the hamstring before Jacques comes back in to pull on the leg. Ray comes back in sans tag to pull on the leg before Jacques puts on a spinning toehold. Davey finally gets back up and monkey flips Ray down, allowing for the tag to Dynamite.

The Kid speeds things way up and sends Ray out to the floor, triggering a brawl between Davey and Raymond. Back inside and Davey hits the powerslam but Jacques breaks it up before a one count. Dynamite comes back in for the headbutt but Jacques drills him with a belly to back suplex for two. Off to an abdominal stretch by Jacques followed by a camel clutch from both Rougeaus. Kid fights up and rams Ray into the buckle to escape but it's right back to the abdominal stretch by Jacques.

Dynamite finally fights up again and headbutts Jacques down to bring in Davey. Jacques immediately grabs the rope to avoid a dropkick but gets caught in a gorilla press onto the top rope. Everything breaks down and Davey picks up Dynamite to launch him into a headbutt on Jacques, but the time limit expires before there can be a cover.

Rating: C+. This was a solid opener as the fans were staying hot throughout the extended rest holds. The parts with both teams brawling and getting to move around made for a much better match, but you can't do that for twenty minutes when you're going for the draw. Draws were much

more commonplace back in the 80s so this was nothing that odd to see.

We see Ron Bass attacking Brutus Beefcake and busting him open with a spur. The big red X saying CENSORED which doesn't actually cover the cut on Brutus' head is hilarious. Brutus won't be able to challenge Honky Tonk Man for the Intercontinental Title tonight but there's an unnamed replacement.

Bad News Brown vs. Ken Patera

Patera is a former Olympic weightlifter who has seen far better days. Bad News is a former Olympian as well, having won a bronze medal in Judo. Brown goes right after Patera during Ken's entrance and drops a quick elbow for no cover. Patera comes back with a clothesline and takes his jacket off to really get things going. A back elbow puts Bad News down but an elbow drop misses. Brown stomps away on the apron as we're firmly in punch and kick mode here.

Patera blocks a backdrop with a kick to the chest and gets two off a bad backbreaker. Off to a bearhug by Patera but Brown pokes him in the eye to escape. Patera can't get his full nelson on in either attempt at the hold so he botches a charge into the corner instead, hitting the post shoulder first. The Ghetto Blaster (enziguri) is enough for the pin by Brown.

Rating: F. Patera was terrible by this point, not even being able to run into Brown's elbow in the corner properly. Even the announcers were suggesting that he retire at this point, which I believe he did soon after. This match was nothing more than punching and kicking which doesn't make for a very entertaining few minutes. It's a product of the times on house shows that, which for all intents and purposes is what this show is: a big house show with a big main event.

Ad for a boxing PPV which had some kind of promotional deal with WWF.

The Mega Powers (Hogan/Savage/Liz) are hyped up for the main event and say that Liz is their secret weapon.

Rick Rude vs. Junkyard Dog

Just like in the previous match, the good guy is jumped during his

entrance. This time though Rude is backdropped down and headbutted to the floor for a hug from Heenan. Back in and Dog misses a headbutt, allowing Rude to hit Dog with a top rope axhandle. Rude pounds away on the head as Graham shouts that it won't work. Instead it's off to a chinlock by Rick as the match slows way down.

Back up and Dog pounds away in the corner but stops to go after Heenan. A Russian legsweep puts Dog down, and Rude goes up top. Instead of immediately diving off though, Rude takes his own tights down to reveal another pair with Cheryl Roberts (as in Jake's wife) on them. Jake charges in for the DQ as you would expect him to do.

Rating: D. The match sucked but it's miles ahead of the previous match. If nothing else Dog had some great charisma and kept the crowd in it, as opposed to Patera who put the crowd to sleep seconds after the bell rang. The Dog was just a jobber at this point and would be in WCW by the end of the year.

The Dog is mad post match but nothing comes of it.

Honky Tonk Man, like the dolt that he is, doesn't want to know the identity of his mystery opponent. He says he wants to be surprised.

Powers of Pain vs. Bolsheviks

The Powers (Barbarian and Warlord) are still faces here and have the Baron (Von Raschke) with them. Just like in the previous two matches the brawl is on as soon as the good guys hit the ring. The Powers double clothesline Boris Zhukov as Volkoff tries to sneak in for a cheap shot. Barbarian easily catches him coming in and sends him flying until we get down to Barbarian vs. Boris to start things off.

Boris puts his head down and....something happens (it looked like a choke but it's not really clear) before it's off to Warlord for a gutwrench suplex on Zhukov. Both Russians double team Warlord but they can't even get him down to his knees. Nikolai chokes away before Boris puts on a chinlock. The Russians have a double backdrop broken up and it's off to Barbarian again. Everything breaks down and it's a double shoulder followed by a swan dive to Boris for the pin.

Rating: D. Another lame match here but the Powers looked decent. The Baron would be gone in a few weeks as the company wasn't pleased that a dark character was getting cheered, so they turned Demolition and their evil S&M looking gear face instead. Also did the Russians ever actually win a major match?

Ad for Survivor Series.

Here's the Brother Love Show with a bell ringing to start it for some reason. After a minute or two of talking about love, he introduces his guest: Hacksaw Jim Duggan. Duggan says that he loves the country and that Love is a fake. Love thinks that Dino Bravo knows the meaning of love and loves his country (Canada), but Duggan says that the people of Canada don't respect Bravo. Duggan says this isn't Sunday school and he'll police this company if need be. Love says he doesn't see a badge on Duggan, but Jim says his 2x4 will do just fine. Duggan gives him a five count to leave and Love is gone at four. This was pointless.

Same boxing ad as earlier.

Intercontinental Title: Honky Tonk Man vs. ???

Honky says to get him someone out here to wrestle and he doesn't care who it is. After a few seconds, the Ultimate Warrior charges to the ring, pounds Honky with right hands, hits a shoulder block and splashes him for the pin and the title in thirty seconds. The crowd ERUPTS, as this is what they've been waiting over a year to see.

So why was this so awesome? This was one of the most perfectly told stories the WWF ever produced and they nailed it every step of the way. Back in 1987, Ricky Steamboat was Intercontinental Champion but wanted to take some time off. The solution was to put the title on the comedic newcomer the Honky Tonk Man, who cheated to win the belt. Honky viewed as a total joke as champion due to his lack of skill and his gimmick of a wrestling Elvis impersonator.

The fans looked at him as someone who would lose the title the first time he defended it against someone far more competent than he was so it wasn't that big of a deal. This is where Vince had the fans: what if

Honky just didn't lose the title? If there is one thing pure fans hate, it's seeing a guy who doesn't deserve a title holding onto it against people they like. Honky did this for the next 18 months by coming up with every way imaginable to cheat, ranging from getting counted out, disqualified, having Jimmy Hart interfere, walking out of matches and all points in between.

Honky continued to hold the title against far better talent, such as Jim Duggan, Randy Savage, Jake Roberts, Ricky Steamboat and Brutus Beefcake, with the idea being "he has to lose eventually." All of a sudden, Honky was one of the biggest draws around because people would pay their money to see him get beaten up, thinking that the lucky streak couldn't go on much longer. Well the streak DID keep going, stretching into the longest title reign in the history of the belt which still stands to this day and will likely never be broken.

This is why having Warrior out there was so brilliant. Warrior was the last guy on earth that you would expect to pull off something clever, but he did what everyone else had overlooked: he didn't bother trying to outsmart Honky, but instead just ran over him and beat him in thirty seconds. This is EXACTLY what the fans had wanted to see for over a year and they got it to perfection. That's the kind of storytelling that you never get anymore which is a shame.

Regis Philbin is here.

Survivor Series is coming, so here's a four minute highlight reel from last year's show. This must be intermission.

Sugar Ray Leonard, one of the boxers in the advertised show, thanks Vince for promoting his fight.

Video on Leonard and his opponent in the fight Donny Lelonde.

Lelonde talks a bit as well.

Leonard says he'll win.

We see the intro video from the beginning of the show again.

Bobby Heenan comes up to the announcers' booth and says that DiBiase is counting his money while Andre reads the Wall Street Journal. The Mega Powers are currently cowering in their locker room.

Dino Bravo vs. Don Muraco

These two fought at Wrestlemania earlier in the year as well. This is power vs. power so they shove each other around to start. Some armdrags put Bravo on the floor before heading back in for a hiptoss. Off to an armbar by Muraco but Bravo comes back with an atomic drop to take over. A Russian legsweep puts Bravo down but Muraco has to go after Bravo's manager Frenchy Martin. The referee gets kicked but nothing comes of it, allowing Bravo to hit his side slam for the pin.

Rating: D-. Somehow that match ran five and a half minutes. Muraco would also be gone soon before the end of the year and it's not hard to see why. He was nowhere near as bad as Patera earlier but it was clear that his best days were behind him. Bravo would become Earthquake's lackey soon after this and have the most productive time of his career.

Another Survivor Series ad.

Jesse Ventura says that he's going to be impartial as the guest referee in the main event despite taking money from DiBiase.

Tag Titles: Hart Foundation vs. Demolition

Demolition is defending and the Harts don't even get an entrance. The champions have Mr. Fuji and the Harts' former manager Jimmy Hart with them. Bret and Ax start things off with Ax pounding Hitman down like he's nothing. Bret avoids an elbow drop and it's off to Anvil (Jim Neidhart) vs. Smash with Neidhart taking over. Ax hits a knee to Jim's back from the apron and the champions take over again.

Neidhart gets in a punch to Ax's face and it's off to Hart vs. Smash again. Smash will have nothing to do with this selling stuff and whips Bret shoulder first into the post as the champions get their first extended advantage. Bret's bad arm is caught up in the ropes and both champs pound away on the injured limb. Smash bends Bret's arm around his

own leg Off to Ax for more cranking on the arm. Bret is shockingly not selling it all that well.

Smash sends the arm into the post again and Bret is in big trouble on the outside. Back in and Ax pounds away while Graham is SCREAMING at Anvil to do something. Bret comes back with a clothesline with the injured arm but the referee misses the tag. Smash charges into a knee in the corner and now the referee sees the tag. Anvil comes in and cleans house, even slingshotting over the top onto Smash on the floor. Back in and Bret throws Anvil into Smash in the corner for two before everything breaks down. Neidhart goes after Fuji, allowing Ax to hit Bret in the back with the megaphone to retain.

Rating: B-. This took some time to get going but once Bret got in and started selling, it was all awesome. Demolition would hold the titles for nearly another year in the longest tag title reign in company history. These teams would go at it again in two years in one of the most entertaining tag matches ever. This was good stuff, but they were capable of much better.

Boxing ad.

Honky is going NUTS in the back, ranting about how this isn't fair.

Big Boss Man vs. Koko B. Ware

Boss Man is brand new here. This wasn't included on the home video version for reasons that I've never figured out. It was probably a time thing though. Koko fires away to start and staggers the very fat Boss Man with a dropkick. Boss Man is one of the best cases of weight loss you'll ever see as he lost probably 100lbs in a year and a half, making him MUCH smoother in the ring.

Koko charges into a front facelock and Boss Man pounds him down with a forearm to the back. A splash in the corner crushes Ware but Boss Man pulls him up at two. Off to a surfboard hold but Koko rolls forward and kicks Boss Man in the face. A stiff right hand puts Koko down again but Boss Man misses a top rope splash. Boss Man misses another splash in the corner and a missile dropkick gets two for Koko. Ware charges again but

gets dropped face first onto the post, followed by the Boss Man Slam for the easy pin.

Rating: D. This went WAY too long for a squash early on in Boss Man's run with the company. The match wasn't terrible and Koko looked good with the high flying stuff, but therein lies the problem: there's no reason to have Koko look so good here. He should have gotten destroyed in about three minutes as opposed to being somewhat competitive in twice as long.

Boss Man hits Koko with the nightstick post match.

Survivor Series ad. Again.

Ultimate Warrior celebrates in the back and talks about it being like a comic book tonight. He'll be on the next spaceship to Parts Unknown.

Jake Roberts vs. Hercules

Jake goes for the snake but it's merely a ploy to get in some quick right hands. A knee lift puts Herc down but Jake can't hook the DDT. Instead it's a headlock and Hercules can't even break it with a belly to back suplex. Herc escapes and drops some elbows for no cover. Off to a chinlock on the Snake as Graham says you can use this to talk to your opponent. In non-announcer speak: it's a nice way to call spots. A lot of spots could be called here as Herc keeps the hold on for well over a minute.

Jake finally fights up and tries a hammerlock but gets elbowed in the face for his efforts. Roberts pulls Herc from the apron to the floor, only to have his neck snapped across the top rope as Hercules comes back in. We hit the chinlock again but Jake immediately jawbreaks his way out of it. The short clothesline looks to set up the DDT but Hercules backdrops out of it. Herc drops an elbow for two but Jake slips out of a slam and knocks Hercules out lukewarm with the DDT for the pin.

Rating: C-. The match was nothing special but it certainly wasn't bad. The DDT looked great and the fans went nuts for it so you can't say they didn't get what they wanted. Hercules was fine for a role like this as he was strong enough to be a threat to anyone but rarely won anything.

Decent little match here actually.

We recap the buildup to the main event. Andre seemed to be challenging Savage for a world title shot but DiBiase jumped Randy from behind, allowing Andre to choke Savage down. The Mega Bucks challenged Savage to a tag match which Savage accepted, saying that he would announce his partner later. If you didn't know who that was from a mile away, you fail as a wrestling fan. Jesse Ventura, long time Hogan hater, is guest referee for no apparent reason. Andre intimidated Jesse and DiBiase paid Jesse off so the fix is in.

Mega Powers vs. Mega Bucks

Jesse sends all three managers (Virgil, Heenan and Liz) to the floor but not to the back. He also makes the teams change corners for no apparent reason. Savage gets to fight Andre to start but it's quickly off to DiBiase. He wants Hogan and gets both Hulk and an atomic drop into a right hand from Savage. Hogan pounds DiBiase as well and it's off to Savage for some double elbows. A top rope ax handle gets two for Savage off a slow count from Ventura.

Andre comes in to beat Hogan down but Jesse is with Liz. Now the Giant comes in legally and sits on Hogan's chest a few times before putting on a nerve hold. With DiBiase coming in sans tag, Andre chokes away with his singlet. Ted comes in legally for a near fall off a clothesline before dropping those trademark fists of his. Off to a chinlock which Gorilla swears is a choke. Hogan finally elbows his way out of the hold but a double clothesline puts both guys down.

The hot tag brings in Savage to pound away on DiBiase with right hands and a backdrop. A top rope ax handle puts DiBiase down again but Ted rams him into the top turnbuckle to change momentum again. DiBiase clotheslines Savage down and it's off to Giant again. Andre sits on Savage in the corner which is a lot more devastating than it sounds. Back to DiBiase who gets two off a suplex. Ted goes up for a middle rope elbow, but Savage uses all of his flying elbow experience and rolls away.

Hulk comes in again off the real hot tag and cleans house on both Mega Bucks but Savage jumps into Andre's boot. Hogan puts DiBiase in a sleeper

but Andre makes the save with some headbutts. The Mega Powers are down, but Liz gets on the apron and in the most famous part of the match, takes off her skirt to reveal a bikini bottom and some nice legs. The distraction lets the Mega Powers do their big handshake and Hulk Up as one. A top rope ax handle to Andre, a flying elbow and legdrop to DiBiase later and things are pretty much done. Jesse only counts two, so Savage has to shove his hand down for the three.

Rating: B-. Much like the original Wrestlemania main event, there isn't much to see here but it's a fun match. It gave the fans exactly what they wanted and the Liz bit was a big surprise as she NEVER did anything sexual up to that point and rarely did after. Hogan and Savage were obviously going to win, but that doesn't mean it wasn't a fun moment and a decent main event.

Hogan lifts Liz (who remember is rather scantily clad here) onto Savage's shoulder for the post match celebration. Savage gives him a look that says "Dude, NOT COOL!" You could see the seeds being planted even back then.

Overall Rating: D+. This is more of the start of a historical series than a good show itself. The only things people remember are Liz's legs and a thirty second squash and it's really not surprising. The rest of the show is a bunch of boring matches with nothing of note to them at all. It's certainly not a terrible show as there are some good tag matches and some decent singles matches, but nothing on here is must see television and nothing is really significant. For a big house show though, not too bad.

Ratings Comparison

For each of the twenty five reviews, I'll be posting a comparison of the original reviews to the redos as I always do. Summerslam was one of the first set of reviews I ever did so the original ratings are going to be very interesting.

British Bulldogs vs. Fabulous Rougeaus

Original: B

Redo: C+

Bad News Brown vs. Ken Patera

Original: D+

Redo: F

Rick Rude vs. Junkyard Dog

Original: D

Redo: D

Powers of Pain vs. Bolsheviks

Original: C+

Redo: D

Ultimate Warrior vs. Honky Tonk Man

Original: A+

Redo: N/A

Dino Bravo vs. Don Muraco

Original: B-

Redo: D-

Demolition vs. Hart Foundation

Original: B-

Redo: B-

Big Boss Man vs. Koko B. Ware

Original: D

Redo: D

Jake Roberts vs. Hercules

Original: C-

Redo: C-

Mega Powers vs. Mega Bucks

Original: B

Redo: B-

Overall Rating

Original: D+

Redo: D+

How could I have possibly liked Muraco vs. Bravo? There's NOTHING there!

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/07/23/history-of-summerslam-count-up-1988-liz-has-some-nice-legs/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my book on the History of Starrcade from Amazon for just \$4 at: