

Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2008: Reach For It Jeff

Royal Rumble 2008

Date: January 27, 2008

Location: Madison Square Garden, New York City New York

Attendance: 20,798

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

We're in New York City again and there are three main events tonight. We have the usual Rumble and Edge defending the Smackdown Title against Mysterio, but the interesting one here was Orton defending against Jeff Hardy. I don't know how they did it, but the company did an OUTSTANDING job of making Hardy seem like he had a very real chance of taking the title tonight and shocking the world. I had no idea who was going to win and I LOVED that feeling. Let's get to it.

The opening video focuses more on the show being in MSG than anything else.

Ric Flair vs. MVP

Flair's career is on the line but MVP's US Title isn't. Flair talks about having his first match here in 1976 but MVP's music cuts him off. MVP takes him into the corner to start and he's BALLIN already. Flair goes after the arm for a second before chopping away at the jumpsuit. MVP comes back with a running boot to the head for two before hooking a chinlock. The fans tell MVP that he sucks as he cranks on the chin.

Flair fights up and picks the leg, only to get small packaged for two. A backdrop puts Flair down and there's a running boot to the face in the corner for three, but Flair has his foot on the rope. You know MSG isn't buying that one. Flair tries to steal the pin but gets clotheslined down for his efforts instead. A superplex gets two for MVP and a double clothesline puts both guys down. Flair starts trying for some fast pins before slugging away. MVP punches him down and hits a facebuster, but the

Playmaker is countered into a quick Figure Four to end this.

Rating: C. This was about what you would expect. At the end of the day, everyone knew Flair wasn't going to lose this but it was a way to give him one last moment in MSG before retiring in April. I'm not wild on him beating the US Champion clean but the title hasn't meant anything in years anyway so what difference does it make?

Vince talks to Horny about the Rumble. This is during the "Vince is Hornswoggle's dad" phase. Vince tells him to not trust Finlay but he has to win. Finlay comes in and takes some offense to Vince telling them not to trust each other.

Mike Adamle is introduced as the newest broadcaster. Oh dear. For those of you that don't remember him, imagine Cole but with something resembling charm.

We recap Jericho vs. JBL. JBL cost Jericho the title at Armageddon and tonight is the blowoff. JBL brought Jericho's children into this too, saying Jericho would have to admit to them that he's a coward. Jericho would use this same line against Shawn soon after this.

Chris Jericho vs. John Bradshaw Layfield

Feeling out process to start with JBL hiding in the corner and ropes a few times. Jericho forearms him down and pounds away but gets sent to the floor. That doesn't last long as he slides right back in and hooks the Walls but JBL immediately grabs the rope. A baseball slide keeps Jibbles on the floor where he is sent into the steps. Back in and Jericho charges into a hot shot to put both guys down.

A clothesline (not the one from down under) puts Jericho down as apparently he has a bad throat and neck coming into this. Bradshaw slingshots Jericho throat first into the middle rope and hooks a quick sleeper. Jericho fights out of it and hits a clothesline of his own, only to charge into a big boot. John sends him shoulder first into the post which busts his head open somehow. Back in and JBL pounds away at the cut as a villain would do. Jericho comes back but they botch a clothesline, causing both guys to get booed loudly. A Cactus Clothesline sends them to

the floor where Jericho cracks JBL with a chair for the LAME DQ.

Rating: D+. This didn't work at all for the most part. Jericho didn't work at all as a face with the short hair during this comeback and I think everyone knew it. Thankfully he would turn heel over the summer and have the feud of the year with Shawn. The ending to this sucked and I don't think they had any other matches after this.

Jericho destroys JBL post match and chokes him with a cord, which is what JBL did to him. That gets Jericho cheered at least.

Santino tells Ashley that Maria won't do Playboy. Thank goodness he was wrong.

We recap Edge vs. Mysterio. Edge is with Vickie now who just happens to be the corrupt GM. Mysterio won a Beat the Clock challenge by beating Edge himself to earn the shot. Edge is annoyed that Rey is claiming that Edge is just using Vickie, which of course he is.

Smackdown World Title: Edge vs. Rey Mysterio

Edge is defending if that's not clear. Vickie, Hawkins and Ryder are at ringside as well. After some big match intros we're ready to go. The fans LOUDLY boo Rey and cheer for Edge as Rey kind of messes up a rana. Edge runs him over but Rey speeds things up, causing Edge to panic a bit. Rey gets sent to the floor where Hawkins and Ryder go after him, only to stop when they're nearly caught. The referee ejects them anyway.

Back in and Rey almost hooks the 619, only to have the champion bail to the floor. Rey is perfectly cool with diving to the floor to take out Edge, drawing boos in a bizarre sequence. Back in and a seated senton gets two for Rey but Edge takes his knee out to take over. Edge pounds away and hooks a half crab for a little while. Rey comes back with kicks to the face to escape and you would think he was choking a kitten from the crowd's reaction.

Rey loads up the 619 but charges into a powerslam for two. Off to a kind of ankle lock hold but bending the knee instead of the ankle. Edge tries to take the knee brace off of Rey but gets caught in the sitout bulldog

to put both guys down. Mysterio uses his good leg to kick Edge in the face for two before hitting another kind of seated senton for two. Like an idiot, Rey goes up and hits a double stomp for two. Smart move on a bad knee Rey. Edge is sent to the floor where Rey slide through the ropes into a tornado DDT for two back inside.

Back in and Edge kicks Rey right in the face to put him down again. Why over complicate things? The spear misses so Rey hits the 619 and the top rope splash, but Vickie pops out of her wheelchair to break up the count. Edge misses another spear and puts himself in 619 position, but Vickie jumps onto the apron to take the hit, allowing Edge to hit the spear for the retaining pin.

Rating: C+. This was ok but you kind of expect more from Edge vs. Rey Mysterio. The ending was about Vickie, which would become a running theme over the next few months. Edge being all conniving and backstabbing the already evil Vickie was awesome stuff, but getting there was tedious at times. Still not a bad match at all though.

Mr. Kennedy is waiting for Flair when he gets out of the shower in a towel. Shawn comes in before anything happens and shakes hands with Flair. Shawn: "Imagine, a loud mouthed platinum blonde with a catchphrase. That gimmick will never work." Batista comes in (pop), as does HHH (lesser pop). HHH: "I've said this a lot of times before Ric, but put your pants on." It turns into a merchandise plug in a cute bit.

Maria comes out to do the Royal Rumble Kiss Cam. This eats up some time until Ashley comes out to ask Maria to be in Playboy again. Santino comes out to insult the fans (and the Giants), saying the people would cheer if you asked if they wanted hepatitis. He brings out Big Dick Johnson with a rubber chicken and wearing a half Patriots jersey. You can figure this one out for yourself.

WrestleMania ad featuring Mae Young as a lifeguard. Ok then.

Mike Adamle introduces us to the next match, featuring Randy Orton vs. Jeff Harvey.

We recap Hardy vs. Orton, which is based on three simple words: Hardy

could win. Apparently this match drew HUGE numbers for the Rumble, which showed why they held out on Hardy winning the belt for nearly a year. Hardy hit a HUGE Swanton off the set on Raw, which made you wonder how far he would go to win here. The video is a mini-history of Orton's career to this point, which isn't really a good idea for a heel. This is followed by a music video about Jeff Hardy set to the song Rooftops by the Lost Prophets, which really fits him well. I remember being very excited for the match and this video was a big reason.

Raw World Title: Randy Orton vs. Jeff Hardy

Jeff is Intercontinental Champion. Feeling out process to start with Jeff taking over via a headlock on the mat. An atomic drop gets two but Orton hits him in the face and brags to the crowd about it. Orton gets sent to the floor and a baseball slide sends him into the barricade. Hardy follows with a plancha to the floor as JR SCREAMS to get Orton back in the ring. Randy tries to walk out with the belt but Hardy will have none of that. Orton is rammed into the announce table and back inside we go.

As Hardy tries a springboard, Orton dropkicks him right back to the floor in a big crash. There's the Orton Stomp and some choking as Orton shows off his wide range of offense. This is before Orton was orange so the visuals aren't all that bad. A pair of knee drops get two on Hardy as Orton asks the fans if they believe in Jeff still. Hardy sends Orton over the top to the floor, followed by a bad clothesline off the apron (it hit Orton's arm and completely missed his neck and chest).

Back in again and Jeff misses a charge into the post, giving Orton both a two count and control again. Randy hooks a chinlock with a bodyscissors followed by a powerslam for two. Back to the chinlock (yep it's an Orton match) to fill in some time. Jeff fights up again and takes Randy down with a clothesline but can't follow up. Jeff starts striking with everything he's got and hits the Whisper in the Wind to fire up the crowd even more.

That's one thing I haven't talked about enough here: the fans are WAY behind Hardy here. It isn't the usual New York reaction to a face. They want Jeff to win the title NOW. Hardy hits the slingshot dropkick in the

corner but before he can hit the Swanton, Randy bails to the floor. Jeff is cool with that and hits (kind of at least) a moonsault to the floor. Back in and Jeff loads up the Twist but Orton counters into the RKO out of nowhere to retain.

Rating: C+. That's a really bad finish for a few reasons. First of all, it's WAY too sudden. If they were shooting at punching the audience in the stomach I guess they accomplished that, but it doesn't do much else. Hardy winning was an option, but at the end of the day they made the right move here....I think. I was disappointed Hardy won, but thankfully WWE stretched it out for a LONG time before he got the title, which was the right move at the end of the day.

Hardy gets a well deserved standing ovation. His time would come.

We get the Rumble by the Numbers video, which is always a favorite of mine. Here are those numbers:

20 years of history

21 winners

569 superstars in the Rumble

36 eliminations (by Austin, since broken by Shawn)

11 Rumbles for Shawn (since broken by Kane)

11 eliminations for Kane in 2001

3 identities under which Foley entered the Rumble in 1997

2 feet that must touch the ground

1 woman in the Rumble (Chyna, since joined by Beth Phoenix and Kharma)

62:12 of time that Mysterio was in the Rumble

2 seconds that Warlord lasted in the Rumble (since broken by Santino)

3 wins for Austin, still a record

1 is the spot that has the same amount of wins as #30 (Shawn and Undertaker)

4 men that have won the Rumble from the 27 spot, the most ever

73 percent of the Rumble winners have won the title at Wrestlemania

I love that.

Royal Rumble

As introduced by Michael Buffer (only the Fink gets all caps in the Garden), #1 is Undertaker, #2 is Shawn Michaels,. Now how's THAT for an opening pair? Isn't it amazing how a RANDOM pairing finishes the match the previous year and opens it this year? 90 second intervals here which seems to be the right amount of time most of the years. Taker powers Shawn around to start and elbows him in the corner.

Shawn gets crotched on the ropes but Taker GOES AIRBORNE with a running boot that misses in the corner. Shawn charges into the grip of Taker as he gets back in but there's no chokeslam. Taker kicks him in the face instead as Santino is #3. Twenty five seconds later Shawn superkicks him and Taker gets the elimination. Shawn tries to dump him but Taker hangs on and works on the arm.

Old School is countered and Shawn hits an atomic drop as Great Khali is #4. Taker jumps him as he comes in as Shawn is down from something we missed. The big chop puts Taker down as the fans tell Khali he can't wrestle. They grab each other by the throat but Khali misses a chop and gets eliminated. Shawn never touched Khali but charges at Taker when it's just the two of them.

Hardcore Holly is #5 and is a tag champion here. Taker slugs Holly down but Shawn tries to dump the big man again. John Morrison, also a tag champion but with Miz instead of Cody Rhodes like Holly, is #6. Morrison looks at Taker and immediately goes after Holly instead. Shawn dumps him to the apron but John gets back in. That winds up being bad for him as he get slammed down by Shawn followed by the top rope elbow.

Shawn tunes up the band but Morrison blocks the kick. Tommy Dreamer is #7

to a big pop and a LOUD Tommy Dreamer chant. #8 is Batista as we get another good blast of energy. Big Dave and Taker knock everyone down (no eliminations) and they stare each other down, only for Dreamer to charge at Batista, earning himself an elimination. Shawn goes after Batista now but Dave spears Morrison down instead.

Hornswoggle is #9 and immediately dives under the ring without ever getting in. Batista and Taker hammer on each other in the corner as Holly clotheslines Shawn to the apron. Chuck Palumbo, a lame biker at this point, is #10. Taker flips Morrison to the apron but he hangs on again. Shawn and Morrison fight on the top rope as Jamie Noble, Palumbo's enemy at this point, is #11. Noble has taped up ribs so his offense can't last long. Palumbo dumps him after less than a minute.

At the moment we have Taker, Shawn, Holly, Batista, Palumbo and Morrison in the ring with Horny underneath. #12 is CM Punk as Morrison makes ANOTHER impressive save. Punk is insanely popular in New York of course and fires off running knees in the corner to everyone he sees, only to charge into a clothesline from Undertaker. Morrison, the guy that took the ECW Title from Punk, pounds away on him. Punk takes Palumbo out but gets jumped from behind by Shawn.

Cody Rhodes is #13 before he means anything at all. Yes he's a tag champion, and yes I stand by what I just said. Cody goes after Punk before shifting over to Taker like an idiot. Umaga is #14 to a decent pop. He spikes Holly out and gets to try on Batista for a bit now. Shawn gets backdropped to the apron but hangs on of course. Snitsky is #15 and badly pounds on everyone at once.

Rhodes jumps on Snitsky's back and they both head to the apron but no further than that. Taker gets headbutted by Umaga as the ring is starting to get too full. Miz is #16 with those stupid shorts of his. He goes after Punk as Taker tries to put Umaga out. Shelton with his even stupider gold hair of his knocks both Miz and Morrison off the top and onto the ropes but not out, before walking into a superkick from Shawn for the elimination in less than 20 seconds.

Jimmy Snuka of all people is #18 to a HUGE pop. He goes after Morrison as

the fans do Snuka's barking kind of chant. Taker gets a headbutt which staggers the dead man before Snuka goes after Miz. At #19 here's Roddy Piper to an even BIGGER pop. He takes his shirt off and causes about half the audience to faint before having a showdown with Snuka, which the rest of the match (remember this includes Umaga, Taker and Shawn) stops to watch. Piper pokes Jimmy in the eyes and the match finally picks up a bit.

Kane is in at #20 to hopefully clean out the ring a bit. Yep he knocks out Piper and Snuka before chokeslamming Miz. Taker loads up a chokeslam on Kane but before he grabs the throat, he spins around and grabs Michaels instead. Carlito is in at #21 and spits the apple at Rhodes. Punk and Morrison pick up Carlito but he kicks off the ropes and sends them both into them. Punk kicks Morrison in the head but gets caught by a Backstabber. Cool little sequence there.

Mick Foley is #22 and you know the fans freak out for him. A double arm DDT takes Kane down as Umaga hits a Samoan Drop on Taker. The ring is WAY too full now with Taker, Michaels, Morrison, Batista, Punk, Rhodes, Umaga, Snitsky, Miz, Kane, Carlito, Foley and Horny under the ring. Morrison hits a springboard kick to take Foley down and Kennedy is #23. I'll say this: the ring has some star power in it.

There's a Mic Check to Miz and a kick to Taker after he sits up from something. A chokeslam puts Kennedy down and Taker starts beating up everyone. Here's Big Daddy V at #24. Taker shoves Snitsky out, Shawn superkicks Taker out and Kennedy throws Shawn out. The only question I have from that: why is Taker on his feet after being superkicked? Taker drops a leg on the announce table on Snitsky because he's a big jerk at times.

Kennedy and Rhodes fight to the apron as Henry is #25. Horny comes out from under the ring and pulls Miz out from the ring for an elimination. Horny goes back under the ring as V is trying to put out Morrison and Kennedy. Chavo is #26 and freshly ECW Champion, thereby making it clear that the ECW Title isn't a world title. Kane sends Morrison to the apron and then to the floor with a big boot.

Horny comes in again as V and Henry double team him. Finlay runs out ahead of the gun (presumably at #27) and blasts both guys with the club. He and Horny leave through the ropes and don't return, with the official statement being that Horny was eliminated for leaving and Finlay was disqualified. In the Rumble. Yeah this story was just badly done overall. Elijah Burke (D'Angelo Dinero) is #28.

Chavo dumps Punk after taking his title on Tuesday. That's just overkill man. Umaga spikes Batista under the ropes and out to the floor. HHH is #29 which leaves a hole at #30. Basically every major star has entered and the announcers aren't sure who is possibly left. Rhodes, V, Foley and Burke all go out at HHH's hands before he pounds on Umaga. The countdown begins for #30.

The roof is blown off the Garden, because JOHN CENA is #30. This is shocking as Cena had torn his pec and had announced that he would be gone until Wrestlemania at the earliest. Imagine that: lying about an injury and getting a big response from the crowd. Who would have ever thought of that, and in wrestling of all things? Carlito, Chavo and Henry are all gone in about fifteen seconds before it's HHH staring Cena down.

We've got Cena, HHH, Batista, Kane, Umaga and Kennedy to go. HHH takes Cena down with a spinebuster but walks into a superkick from Umaga. Batista takes Umaga down with the spinebuster and dumps Kennedy to get us down to five. There goes Umaga and we're down to four. HHH and Batista dump Kane and we've got three left. Batista gives the double thumbs down, Cena says you can't see me and HHH says suck it. They are fighting catchphrases and it's on.

Trips and Cena go after Big Dave but he clotheslines them both down. The spinebuster plants Cena and another one takes HHH down. The fans don't seem thrilled with Batista so they cheer when Cena backdrops him down. HHH clotheslines Batista out and we're down to HHH vs. Cena.

Since this is New York, the fans hate Cena by default and it's boo/yay time. Triple H pounds away but walks into the Protobomb and the Shuffle. The finishers are both countered and they clothesline each other down. Cena can't FU HHH out and gets caught in a DDT. The finishers are

countered again until Cena hits the FU on HHH for the elimination and the win.

Rating: C+. It took awhile to get through the bad parts but once Cena's music hit the place was electric. The fans booing Cena doesn't surprise me at all because that's how New York works. Cena would wind up facing Orton at No Way Out for some reason, resulting in a three way at Mania with HHH involved as well.

Cena celebrates to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. Well it definitely wasn't terrible but at the end of the day, nothing is really all that good here at all. The best match is probably Hardy vs. Orton and that's just ok. On the other hand though, nothing is really bad here and you likely won't be bored with the show. It's one of those shows where you watch it and other than Cena's return, you probably won't remember watching it two days later.

Ratings Comparison

Ric Flair vs. MVP

Original: B-

Redo: C

John Bradshaw Layfield vs. Chris Jericho

Original: D+

Redo: D+

Edge vs. Rey Mysterio

Original: A-

Redo: C+

Jeff Hardy vs. Randy Orton

Original: C-

Redo: C+

Royal Rumble

Original: C-

Redo: C+

Overall Rating

Original: C+

Redo: C-

Wow the Smackdown title match really changed things around here.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/27/royal-rumble-count-up-2008-screw-wwes-list-this-is-the-1-rumble-moment/>

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