

Summerslam Count-Up – 1996: That's A Good Double Feature

Summerslam 1996

Date: August 18, 1996

Location: Gund Arena, Cleveland, Ohio

Attendance: 17,000

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jim Ross, Mr. Perfect

Things have changed quite a bit since last year. For one thing, the NWO currently has its foot on the WWF's neck but no one knew how bad it was going to get. Shawn was pretty much tanking as champion but he's still defending tonight against Vader. The major match though is Undertaker vs. Mankind in a Boiler Room Brawl which has the potential to be awesome. Let's get to it.

The pre-show match is kind of famous so I'll throw it in as a bonus.

Steve Austin vs. Yokozuna

Austin is fresh off winning the King of the Ring and cutting the promo that made him famous. Yoko is so fat it's terrifying at this point. Austin still has very slow music here which sounds like it belongs in a romantic drama. He goes right after the big man to start but a single right hand puts Steve down. A double middle finger earns Austin a Samoan drop and a legdrop. Yoko loads up the Banzai Drop and the freaking ring breaks with Yoko falling down to the mat, giving Austin an easy pin.

The opening video is about monsters like Vader and Mankind wearing masks but heroes standing up to them no matter what.

Owen Hart vs. Savio Vega

Owen has a broken arm/wrist coming in. Feeling out process to start with the referee warning Owen about using the cast. Savio does the smart thing by ramming the bad arm into the buckle to take over. We hit an armbar as we cut to Vader's locker room to see Cornette firing him up. A monkey

flip and a dropkick put Owen down and it's back to the armbar. Owen kicks out of a rollup and sends Savio shoulder first into the post as momentum changes all of a sudden.

Off to a wristlock on Vega as the match is still waiting to get off the ground. Owen puts on a long armbar followed by a DDT on the arm for two. Vega bites his way out of the hold as the crowd is dead quiet for this. Owen charges into a boot and here's Clarence Mason, a lawyer, to watch the match. An enziguri puts Vega down for two and a few rollups get the same for Savio.

Hart takes him down with a spinwheel kick but Savio comes back with right hands and clotheslines. Owen's missile dropkick gets two as the crowd is into this all of a sudden. Hart is crotched on another top rope attempt but Savio lands on the cast in his belly to back superplex. Owen slips off the cast and lays out Savio (with the referee looking right at him), setting up the Sharpshooter for the win.

Rating: C. This took awhile to get going and could have shaved off five minutes or so. Savio was nothing special at all and Owen was in a transitional phase of his career as he was trying to become a singles guy but wasn't ready to do it yet. The match wasn't bad and picked way up but the ending was lame.

Post match Justin Hawk Bradshaw comes out to lay out Vega once again.

Todd Petingill is in the boiler room and finds Mankind licking a pipe and saying there's no place like home.

Tag Titles: Smoking Gunns vs. New Rockers vs. Bodydonnas vs. Godwinns

The heel Gunns are defending and this is under elimination rules. The New Rockers are Marty Jannetty and Leif Cassidy (Al Snow) and the Bodydonnas are Skip (Chris Candido) and Zip (Tom Pritchard). Skip is in a neck brace here due to a potentially broken neck but he's wrestling anyway. The Gunns have Sunny who looks GREAT as a cowgirl. Billy Gunn starts with Henry Godwinn with Hank throwing Billy around with ease.

A wheelbarrow slam sends Billy out to the floor and it's off to Phineas

vs. Zip. After a comedic feeling out process it's off to both Gunns at the same time. Zip and Phineas strut across the ring for no apparent reason as the Gunns freak out about having to fight each other. The referee says either make contact or be disqualified. After no contact, Bart tags in Zip so the crowd can have something else to be bored by. Jannetty trips Zip and Billy gets an easy pin so the Bodydonnas don't have to be out there long.

Henry comes back in to crank on Billy's arm but Billy quickly tags out to Jannetty. Marty slowly pounds on Henry and plays to the comatose crowd. Leif gets the tag but quickly brings in Billy to work over Henry. The Rockers have a miscue with the Gunns and Henry gets two off a side slam on Billy. Marty's save results in an elbow drop on Billy as everything breaks down. Henry kicks Marty into Leif and hits the Slop Drop (reverse DDT) on Cassidy for the elimination.

We're down to the Godwinns vs. the champions and it's Bart in for the first time. Henry explodes out of the corner with a clothesline to put both guys down. Bart breaks up a tag attempt as this match is dragging terribly. Billy comes in and the place is so silent you can hear the insults between the wrestlers.

Back to Bart to pound away on Henry for a few moments before bringing Billy back in. Henry catches a charging Billy in a World's strongest Slam and there's the lukewarm tag to Phineas. He cleans house and everything breaks down with Phineas hitting the Slop Drop on Billy, only to have Bart blast Phineas from the top for the pin to retain.

Rating: D-. This was so boring I could barely keep my eyes open. The tag title scene was so barren at this point that there were practically zero interesting acts at all. That would be the case for over a year when the New Age Outlaws FINALLY brought the division back to life for a few years. Terribly boring match.

Post match Sunny insults the women in the audience and unveils a huge poster of herself to make the arena prettier.

Video on the Summerslam festivities in the city this weekend.

Sycho Sid vs. British Bulldog

Sid is just back after being out for about six months with an injury. He's part of Shawn's war with Camp Cornette, making this a lower level battle in the feud. The fans are WAY into Sid here which makes his title reigns a lot more understandable. Neither guy goes anywhere on some collisions until Sid slams him down to the floor. A LOUD Let's Go Sid chant starts up, giving us more interest than the entire tag title match had combined.

Bulldog tries to power out of a headlock as the announcers talk about Mason being out here instead of Cornette again. A powerslam gets two for Sid but Bulldog comes back with the delayed vertical suplex. That's some impressive power, especially on a guy that tall. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Bulldog clotheslines Sid to the floor. Bulldog clotheslines him down again and flips forward to entertain us while Sid is down. Back to the chinlock before Bulldog hits the powerslam clean, but here's Cornette to argue with Mason. Another powerslam is countered into the chokeslam and an AWESOME powerbomb is good for the pin.

Rating: D+. The match was better than you would think with both guys' power stuff looking good. That powerbomb was great as Bulldog just stopped once he hit the mat and the selling was even better. Sid is just scary over at this point, which made his heel turn all the better. To be fair though, the fans just wouldn't boo the guy even when he was a heel. Take that for what you will.

The managers keep arguing post match.

Video on Shawn.

Goldust vs. Marc Mero

Marlena and Sable are the seconds here and Goldust has a thing for the latter. Goldust takes him into the corner and rubs his own chest before slapping Mero in the face. Some armdrags take Goldie down and he hides in the corner. They run the ropes a bit with Mero getting two off a cross body and hooking an armbar. The crowd is dead again so the announcers talk about Ahmed Johnson's kidney injury.

Back up and Goldust backdrops Mero out to the floor before dropping him throat first across the barricade. Goldust hooks a chinlock and here's Mankind who has been calling Sable mommy lately. Some referees chase him off a few seconds later, making this your pointless cameo of the show. A knee to the ribs puts Mero down for two but he comes off the middle rope with a back elbow to the jaw.

A clothesline and a backdrop put Goldust down again and a million dollar kneelift does the same. Goldust counters punches in the corner and they both tumble to the floor but Mero slides back in and hits a running flip dive. A slingshot legdrop gets two followed by the debut of the Shooting Star Press, called the Wild Thing. Since this is 1996 WWF, it only gets two. A few seconds later Goldust hits the Curtain Call (reverse forward suplex) for the pin.

Rating: D. Another dull match here other than the Shooting Star. Goldust was all thought and character but little in the area of substance in the ring. The crowd was dead again here other than for the Wild Thing which was by far the most exciting thing in the match. There wasn't much to see here but as was the case back then, a lot of matches on PPV were filler.

Goldust stalks Sable post match until Mero makes the save.

We recap Jake Roberts vs. Jerry Lawler. Jake claimed to have sobered up and was speaking at churches about how Jesus helped him overcome his demons. Lawler claimed that Roberts was a fraud (which was the case in real life as he was still hooked on crack) and tonight is the showdown.

Jerry Lawler vs. Jake Roberts

Before the match we have the debut of a new Olympian who will be getting in the ring soon: Mark Henry. Lawler brings his own bag with him along with something in his pocket. He's also wearing a Baltimore Ravens jersey (the beloved Cleveland Browns had recently moved to Baltimore and become the Ravens) because Lawler knows how to rile up a crowd like few others ever could. Henry thinks it's hilarious despite being a face.

Lawler pulls out two bottles of Jim Beam to be Roberts' partners tonight and says Roberts' wife only looks good after a six pack. Henry is so

stupid that if he won a gold medal he'd have it bronzed. Once Roberts uses his bar stool as a walker to get out here, Lawler is going to knock him sideways so everyone can recognize him. It's very impressive how easily Lawler can have a crowd eating out of the palm of his hand like this.

Roberts finally comes out so Lawler pulls a huge bottle of booze from the bag. Jake pulls the snake out of his own bag to scare Lawler to the floor and the bell finally rings. Lawler looks for a microphone but Jake sends him face first into the steps and hammers away back inside. Back to the floor with Lawler being sent into various hard objects until he steals a drink from a fan to blind Jake. Henry: "So what is the fan going to drink?" Lawler gets one of the bottles from ringside but has to block a DDT attempt. Another DDT is countered and Jerry hits him in the throat with the bottle for the pin.

Rating: D. This was much more of an angle than a match with Lawler giving a great lesson in how to fire up a crowd. Roberts wouldn't be around much longer before heading to ECW and the indies. This would lead to Henry's first mini feud against Lawler which started got his career going in slow motion.

Post match Lawler says Roberts is holding his throat because he wants a drink. Lawler opens the big bottle to pour it down Jake's throat but Mark Henry makes a delayed save.

Bob Backlund campaigns for President.

Paul Bearer comes to the ring. The next match will be won by retrieving the Urn from his hands.

Undertaker vs. Mankind

This is the Boiler Room Brawl, meaning the fight starts in the boiler room and you win by fighting to the ring and getting the Urn from Bearer. Taker goes into the room where Mankind is hiding somewhere. This is bordering on creepy as Taker is looking through the shadows to find Mankind but only finds machines. Mankind sneaks up on him with a pipe to the back as the fight begins. Keep in mind that the people in the arena

are seeing this on TV screens as there's no Titantron yet.

Undertaker comes back with a trashcan lid to the head and they brawl around the room with Mankind in control. The announcers have stopped talking as Mankind stuns Taker across a wooden stand. A stiff right hand puts Taker down and Mankind chokes away. The camera cuts out for a few moments so something can be edited and we come back with a trashcan shot putting Taker down.

Taker finds a pipe to knock the can into Mankind's face but Mankind turns a valve to shoot steam into Taker's face. A clothesline sends the can into Mankind's face and the slow brawling continues. Taker hits him in the face with a wooden pallet but Mankind hits Taker low with a pipe of some kind. Mankind sends him into a wall and hits the running knee to drive Taker's head into the wall again. An elbow off a ladder keeps Taker down and Mankind drags him along the floor.

The camera goes out again and the audience boos. Back with Undertaker laid out on the floor and Mankind setting up a ladder next to him. Mankind climbs up and in the best remembered spot of the match, Undertaker sits up and pulls him down onto a pile of pipes. Back up and Mankind goes for the door but Undertaker grabs him by the ankle. A fire extinguisher blast to the face puts Mankind down and it's Undertaker out the door first. Mankind rams him into the door and gets out, only to fall in the aisle.

With Taker still inside Mankind barricade the door but Taker kicks it in anyway. They fight up the aisle with jobbers watching from the doors. Taker shoves him across the coffee area, allowing Mankind to get ahead a bit. He throws hot coffee onto Undertaker and crawls into the arena to give the fans something to see in person. Taker catches up with him and pounds away but Mankind keeps him out of the ring.

A Texas piledriver onto the concrete knocks Undertaker out cold but he sits up just in time to pull Mankind off the apron, slamming the back of his head into the concrete. Undertaker gets inside and gets on one knee in front of Paul but Bearer won't give him the Urn. Mankind gets in and knocks Taker out with the Claw before Bearer does the unthinkable by

turning on Undertaker and giving Mankind the Urn.

Rating: B. This is a hard one to grade as it was VERY long (nearly half an hour) and was unlike any other match up to this point. This match would have killed in the Attitude Era but here it's just quite good. Bearer turning was shocking as he had managed Undertaker for nearly six years and I don't think anyone believed he would ever turn on Undertaker.

Druids come out to carry Undertaker to the back. He'd be back the next night like nothing happened.

Camp Cornette is ready for Shawn Michaels. Cornette: "When Vader grabs you by the neck Shawn Michaels, you're going to sound like Peter Frampton's electric kazoo." WHERE DOES HE COME UP WITH THIS STUFF???

WWF World Title: Vader vs. Shawn Michaels

Vader is challenging after pinning Shawn in a six man tag at In Your House #9. He pounds Shawn in the face to start before taking his head off with a clothesline. Shawn catches a big boot and leg sweeps Vader down before hitting a low dropkick to stun Vader. Michaels fires off rights and lefts from his knees and Vader bails to the floor. A HUGE dive takes him down again as the fans are finally waking up a bit.

Back in and a standing hurricanrana takes Vader down and a victory roll sends him back out to the floor. Shawn's plancha into a hurricanrana is caught in a powerbomb and momentum changes in a hurry. Vader puts him on his shoulder and carries Shawn up the steps with one arm in a very impressive power display. A big suplex puts Shawn down again and Mr. Perfect gloats a lot. Shawn is sent into a Flair Flip in the corner and another whip sends him out to the floor.

Vader pounds away back inside but Shawn comes back with rights and lefts of his own. He can't drop Vader though and a hard clothesline takes Shawn down again. Shawn tries to skin the cat but Vader pulls him back in and hits a kind of reverse jackknife for two. Off to a modified bearhug on the champion for a few moments until Shawn fights back with a running knee to the chest. Vader blocks a sunset flip but his jumping seated senton hits knees.

A hard clothesline puts Vader down and we get a semi-famous spot as Shawn goes up but aborts the elbow in mid flight, instead hitting a flying stomp. He throws a fit and yells at Vader before a cross body puts both guys on the floor. Vader drops Shawn throat first across the barricade....for a countout win? Seriously? Female fan: "NO! NO! NO!" Cornette agrees because he wants to win the title by pin instead of countout.

Shawn agrees to get back in but Vader punches him down on the floor. Cornette pops Shawn in the back with the tennis racket and a belly to belly gets two for Vader. Michaels punches his way out of the powerbomb and hits the forearm/nip-up combo. He tunes up the band but Cornette throws in the racket, only to have Shawn intercept it and blast Vader for the DQ.

The third part of the match begins (Cornette, WE DON'T WANT IT THAT WAY, ring the bell again) with Shawn avoiding another seated senton and now the top rope elbow connects. Sweet Chin Music only gets two and the referee is knocked to the floor. Vader hits the powerbomb and a second referee comes in to count two. Cornette is stunned as Vader goes up, only to miss the moonsault. Shawn goes up top and hits a moonsault press to retain the title.

Rating: B+. I've only seen this match once or twice and it really holds up. Shawn was in his element here against a monster and he capitalized on Vader's greed for the title to finally beat him. The problem was the people didn't care about Shawn until he got in the ring which made him a hard sell for the fans. Still though, excellent match here.

Overall Rating: C. Well the last two matches are both good to great, but it takes awhile to get there. Thankfully for the show those matches take up over an hour of the card and help things out a lot. Unfortunately the NWO was running roughshod on the wrestling world at this point so the good matches here didn't mean much at all. This wasn't one of the stronger entries in the series though.

Ratings Comparison

Owen Hart vs. Savio Vega

Original: B+

Redo: C

Smoking Gunns vs. Bodydonnas vs. New Rockers vs. Godwinns

Original: B-

Redo: D-

British Bulldog vs. Sycho Sid

Original: D

Redo: D+

Marc Mero vs. Goldust

Original: C+

Redo: D

Jerry Lawler vs. Jake Roberts

Original: C-

Redo: D

Mankind vs. Undertaker

Original: A-

Redo: B

Vader vs. Shawn Michaels

Original: A-

Redo: B+

Overall Rating

Original: A

Redo: C

Did I owe this show money a few years ago? My jaw is hanging open as I read these ratings again.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/07/30/history-of-summerslam-count-up-1996-mick-foley-has-arrived/>

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