

Summerslam Count-Up – 1998: As Big As It Gets

Summerslam 1998

Date: August 30, 1998

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

Attendance: 21,588

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

A year has passed and a lot has changed. The biggest things of all are Austin being the WWF Champion and Raw dominating the Monday Night Wars. The Attitude Era is in full swing and there's nothing standing in the way of the WWF at this point. We have Austin defending the title against Undertaker in the main event after a summer of wondering if Undertaker is in league with the evil Vince McMahon. This is the biggest Summerslam of all time and could have easily been Wrestlemania if it was that time of the year. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about how all the lies will be revealed tonight. Vince has promised Undertaker the title in exchange for something that hasn't been revealed yet, leading to the conspiracy theories.

European Title: Val Venis vs. D'Lo Brown

Brown is defending and there's no story to this that I remember. It has a sixty minute time limit, just in case the lower midcard title match in the opening slot pushes going Broadway. Since we're in MSG we have the old school set with the entrance opposite the cameras instead of off to one side. This is Venis' first title shot and D'Lo is doing a gimmick where he's from a different European city each time with tonight being Helsinki. He's also part of the Nation of Domination here but only has his chest protector for an advantage here.

Brown shoves him into the ropes to start and they slap hands. The champion also slaps Val's face to tick him off as JR tells us about Austin destroying a hearse which may have had Undertaker or Kane inside. Brown hits a standing splash with the chest protector for added impact to take over. A splash misses in the corner though and Venis takes over with a Russian legsweep. After a quick breather on the floor, Brown comes back in to run the ropes but he gets caught in a spinebuster. A newcomer named Edge is watching in the crowd.

Venis misses a splash and gets caught in a belly to back suplex to give Brown control again. Val comes back with an overhead t-bone suplex but walks into a clothesline followed by a legdrop for two. A leg lariat and a middle rope elbow gets the same and Val is holding his back for some reason. Brown follows up on the injury with a Texas Cloverleaf but lets it go after only a few seconds. Did he learn submissions from No Mercy? Brown misses a middle rope senton and both guys are down. The fans are much more into this than you would expect them to be.

Val hits some running knees to the ribs and a backdrop for no cover. He tries a high cross body but gets caught in a Sky High (lifting powerbomb) which gets a delayed two count. Brown hits a quick DDT but dives off the middle rope into a powerslam for two. A butterfly suplex sets up the Money Shot (top rope splash) but Brown gets his knees up.

The fans LOUDLY chant for D'Lo but he can't get Val all the way up for a powerbomb. Another try is good for a running Liger Bomb but the Low Down frog splash misses. Val finally rips off the chest protector and puts it on himself before going up top. The referee tries to pull him down and crotches him, earning a toss from Val for the DQ.

Rating: C+. I was digging this until the lame ending. The problem here was the match built up over fifteen minutes and then hit a brick wall with a referee crotching a guy on the top and then complaining that the guy was hurt. That's not a satisfactory ending to a match with that long of a build, but at least the build was good.

Val slams the referee and hits a Money Shot.

Mankind is mad that Austin broke the hearse ("I have to take it to the Brisco Brothers Body Shop.") because he wanted to put Kane in it later tonight. Mankind has a sledge hammer and wants to use it on someone.

Insane Clown Posse plays the Oddities to the ring to a HUGE reaction.

Oddities vs. Kaientai

The Oddities are Golga (Earthquake under a mask), Giant Silva (Great Khali's size and about a tenth of the skill) and Kurrigan (uh...yeah). Kaientai is a four man heel team here and not the comedy guys they would become in a year or so. Golga starts with Light Heavyweight Champion Taka Michinoku and the big man rams his own head into the buckle for some reason. He shoves down all four members of Kaientai as we're firmly in comedy match territory.

Golga steals Kaientai's manager Yamaguchi-San's shoes and blasts various people with it before it's off to the dancing Kurrigan. He gets on his knees to fight Funaki in a funny bit before dancing even more. Three of the four Japanese guys swarm Kurrigan to no effect as he cleans house anyway. Yamaguchi-San is shoved down again and it's off to Silva to clean the little bit of the house which isn't taken care of yet.

Kaientai gets in a fight over who comes in but it's Dick Togo (Best name EVER) who gets the job. All four guys come in again but they can't combine to lift Silva's legs. Silva sends all four of them into the corner and crushes them at once before Kurrigan comes in to whip one into the other three. Silva throws Taka over the top onto the other three as this is complete dominance. Back in and Golga tries a seated senton on Mens Teioh but Taka and Togo hit a double dropkick to stagger him.

Two members of the team combine to slam him and four straight top rope

splashes followed by four straight legdrops get no cover. A quadruple dropkick has Golga in trouble but a quadruple clothesline puts Kaientai down. The hot tag brings in Kurrigan who takes down everyone in sight and hits a wicked side slam on Funaki. Everything breaks down as managers Luna Vachon and Yamaguchi-San get in a fight. A quadruple chokeslam is good for the pin by Golga on everyone from Japan.

Rating: C-. The match was nothing but comedy, it was overly long, Golga is the only Oddity that could do a thing in the ring....and I can't help but love the Oddities. There's just something so innocently goofy about them that I smile every time I see Kurrigan do his dance. The match sucked but it has no expectations coming in so it's completely harmless.

Jeff Jarrett vs. X-Pac

Hair vs. Hair here and Jarrett has Southern Justice (the Godwinns) with him. They combined to cut Howard Finkel's hair earlier tonight so he's in Pac's corner in case the ending wasn't obvious yet. Commissioner Sgt. Slaughter throws Southern Justice out before we get going. In something I never thought I'd see, Fink does the crotch chop. Jeff jumps Pac from behind but a spinwheel kick and a clothesline puts Jarrett on the floor. A big dive takes him out again and the crowd is into X-Pac.

Back in and Jeff hits a pair of great dropkicks to send Pac out to the floor. Pac is crotched against the post and Jarrett pounds away in the ring. A snap powerslam gets two but Pac comes back with a tornado DDT for two. The crowd continues to be white hot as Finkel plays cheerleader. Some kicks in the corner have Jarrett in trouble but he grabs a quick sleeper to stop X-Pac's momentum.

As is always the case when Jarrett puts someone in a sleeper, the other guy hooks a quick sleeper on Jeff but gets reversed into the corner. Pac misses a cross body out of the corner to give Jarrett two and it's Figure Four time. The hold stays on for a very long time but Pac gets too close to the ropes, making Jeff let go to put it on again. The break lets Pac

kick him into the corner before taking Jeff's head off with a spinwheel kick. There's the Bronco Buster and X-Pac rolls through a high cross body for two.

A Jarrett leapfrog is countered into a sitout powerbomb for two and Howard is starting to panic. Another Bronco Buster attempt is countered by a low blow but Jarrett stops to hit the Fink, allowing the X Factor to connect for a VERY close two. Southern Justice is back but Dennis Knight (Phineas) drops a guitar, giving Pac the shot to Jarrett for the pin.

Rating: C. Not bad here but it went a bit too long for what they were trying to do. If Southern Justice could come out at the end, where were they for the other ten minutes of the match? The haircut was the move that Jarrett needed as he changed his entire character from Tennessee Guy to chauvinist pig soon after this.

The Outlaws, the Headbangers and Droz come out to hold Jarrett's arms down for the haircut. This is the debut of Jarrett's short hair which he's had almost ever since.

Michael Cole asks Rock about attacking HHH's knee with the IC Title belt on Sunday Night Heat. Rock threatens to smack Cole with the belt if he asks another stupid question. Tonight he proves he's the people's champ. Cole: "Thank you Rock and back...." Rock: "Shut up. Back to the jabronis at ringside."

Jacqueline/Marc Mero vs. Sable/???

This is the final blowoff of the long Mero vs. Sable feud. The mystery partner is Edge who has only been around for a month or so at this time. The guys start things off with Edge hitting some quick Japanese armdrags. Off to Jackie who demands Sable come in but runs off to Mero as soon as the blonde comes in. Edge hits a quick flapjack but Jackie trips him up to give Mero a free shot.

The million dollar kneelift puts Edge down and Jackie chokes even more. Mero's TKO is countered into a DDT and it's off to the girls again. Sable hits her kicks in the corner and a forearm to knock Marc to the floor but she can't powerbomb Mero. Jackie gets in a cheap shot but gets caught in a passable TKO (fireman's carry into a cutter) for two as Mero makes a save.

Jackie accidentally drills Mero (he's having a bad night) and it's back to the guys for a dive from Edge. Jackie tries to choke Edge but gets spanked for her efforts. Back in and a high cross gets two for Edge and drops Mero with a neckbreaker out of the corner. Marc comes back with a Samoan drop but gets crotched going up. Sable gets the tag and hits a top rope rana for one. Jackie's save messes up and everything breaks down. The Downward Spiral lays out Mero and Edge drops Sable on top of him for the pin and a big pop.

Rating: C-. The match kind of sucked but Sable was WAY over. You have to remember how big of a deal she was back then to keep this in context. Sable was the final thing you would see on Raw a lot of the time, much like Cena is today. The biggest problem I still have with this match is what JR says at the end: "SHE DID IT!" This was all about Sable and Edge, the guy they were trying to rub, could have been any other guy.

Mankind doesn't know what to do because Kane can't wrestle tonight and he's lost his sledgehammer. Maybe Michael Cole can be his partner tonight. Or maybe Mankind can go out and play in traffic. If the people want their money's worth, that's what he's willing to do. Vince comes up to calm Mankind down and reminds him of his legacy in MSG. If Mankind can win a handicap match in MSG, he'll be in the Hall of Fame by Tuesday.

Mankind doesn't have a weapon but Vince brings him up a cookie sheet. "I'm handing you immortality on a silver platter!" Mankind says if the Outlaws have a problem with him beating them both, he has thirteen words for them: how much wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood. Foley was feeling it here and is pretty keyed up to be in

MSG.

We recap Owen Hart vs. Ken Shamrock. Hart has been trained by Dan Severn, Shamrock's old UFC rival, to set up a Lion's Den match which is basically a UFC cage knockoff.

Owen Hart vs. Ken Shamrock

This is in a theater adjacent to MSG. You win by submission or knockout I believe but JR isn't really clear on it. It's a cool visual if nothing else. Shamrock rams him into the cage before taking him down to the mat where we start trading submissions. Ken pounds away at the head and suplexes Owen down before choking away. Owen hits a legal low blow to escape but Shamrock clotheslines him down with ease. I think that passes the point of logical no selling.

Shamrock chokes Owen with his shirt before taking him down with an easy throw. Owen finally realizes he can't go toe to toe with Ken and rams him face first into the cage. Hart pounds away against the cage and lays Shamrock out with an enziguri. A hot shot into the cage sets up a backbreaker but Shamrock backdrops out of a piledriver. Another kick to Ken's head changes control again but Shamrock wins a quick slugout. He runs up the cage for a back elbow then kicks Owen in the face.

Hart comes right back with a powerslam and a belly to belly sets up the Sharpshooter. In an awesome counter, Shamrock crawls over to the cage and pulls himself up the wall to escape the hold. A tornado DDT off the wall puts Owen down and a spinwheel kick does the same. Owen sends him into the cage and tries a dragon sleeper but Shamrock walks up the cage to backflip out and the ankle lock gets the submission.

Rating: B. This was different than your usual wrestling match but more importantly it was fun. These two beat the tar out of each other and the whole thing worked very well. Notice the main difference here than what you would get today: you never heard the letters UFC here, meaning

there's nothing to compare it to, making this match seem more impressive. Today you would hear UFC and Ultimate Fighting dropped every two seconds and it would just make you want to watch a UFC show.

Austin is ready.

Tag Titles: Mankind vs. New Age Outlaws

Mankind and Kane are the champions but as mentioned Kane is missing. This is no holds barred and falls count anywhere, making this a hardcore match. The Outlaws are ridiculously over and Mankind is approaching his face turn if not almost already there. Billy and Roadie bring a dumpster to the ring but Mankind meets them with the cookie sheet. He and Billy both get chairs and Mankind wins a quick duel but the numbers game catches up with him.

They take turns hitting him in the head with metal objects and hit a prototype Conchairto for good measure. Mankind comes back with a running knee to crush the cookie sheet into Roadie's face and gets two off a neckbreaker to Gunn. Dogg breaks up the elbow off the apron and the Outlaws ram Mankind's head into the dumpster. Roadie sets up a table in the corner but Mankind sends Gunn through it instead. The reverse 3D gets two for Dogg and the fans are trying to get behind Mankind. A powerbomb through two chairs is only good for two but a spike piledriver onto a title belt is good for the pin.

Rating: D+. This was a weird match as the Outlaws were the automatic heels despite the fans liking them. That being said, it's Mick Foley in New York. The guy is over like free beer in a frat house so there's no way the fans are going to be against him. Billy and Road Dogg wrestled like heels here but as JR said, they're not breaking any rules and they want their titles back. It's not like you can blame them, but you were supposed to which just made it weird.

Post match the Outlaws go to put Mankind in the dumpster but Kane pops

out. He pulls out the sledgehammer and crushes Mankind's head, officially turning Mankind face.

We recap HHH vs. The Rock. These two led their respective factions in a major war over the summer and this is the final blowoff (not really but for all intents and purposes it was done after this). Rock is Intercontinental Champion and the belt is being held above the ring for a ladder match. The idea is there's no one left to help Rock or HHH and it's all about who is the better man.

Intercontinental Title: The Rock vs. HHH

Rock has held the title since December and there hasn't been a longer reign since. The DX band plays HHH to the ring. Chyna and Mark Henry are the seconds here. The referee takes a long time to get the belt ready which is why it's usually above the ring when the match begins. Rock talks some trash and the fight is on. A quick clothesline takes the champion down and a facebuster does the same. HHH escapes the Rock Bottom but gets punched down in the corner.

A quick Pedigree attempt is countered with a backdrop to the floor and Rock goes for the ladder. As is the custom, there's a fight over who gets to bring the ladder into the ring. HHH takes the fight back to the ring before going after a ladder. This time it's Rock's turn to stop the attempt and they fight in the aisle again. Rock gets a ladder up against the ring and whips HHH HARD into the steel.

The champion starts his climb but HHH flies in off the top to break it up, but the ladder falls on him to keep both guys down. A hard ladder shot puts Rock down again and HHH drives the top of the ladder into his ribs. Rock pulls HHH off the ladder and the future Game lands on his knee, legitimately injuring it and requiring several months off to heal up. Some elbows to the knee make the pain even worse but the ladder being dropped on it is far more painful.

Rock puts the leg between the ladder legs and crushes it with the chair for good measure. Now the leg is wrapped around the post and the fans are split. Rock bridges the ladder between the steps and the barricade so he can drop the knee across the steel. The ladder is barely in one piece so Rock's climbing is very slow, allowing HHH to make a last second save. He also shoves the ladder down until his knee can recover a bit.

Rock is shoved to the floor but he catches HHH in a catapult face first into the ladder. The champion tries to slam the ladder onto HHH but a kick to the ribs makes him drop the ladder. A clothesline puts Rock down but he counters a Pedigree into a backdrop onto the ladder. Mark Henry throws in another ladder but Rock does the slowest climb in recorded history, allowing HHH to shove it down again. HHH baseball slides the top of the ladder into Rock's face to send him to the floor, busting him open bad.

Now it's time for HHH to climb up but Rock makes another save to send HHH crashing to the mat. Rock puts a ladder on top of the corner and plants HHH with a DDT. Both guys slowly climb for a slugout on top but it's HHH being shoved off into the ladder in the corner. With one last rush he shoves Rock's ladder over to get us back to even again. Chyna slides HHH a chair and knocks the ladder into Rock before beating the chair into the ladder over and over again.

HHH can't follow up so Rock slams him down onto the ladder and hits a People's Elbow to get the crowd on his side again. HHH somehow gets up again and tries a climb but makes the mistake of diving onto Rock for a Rock Bottom. Rock goes up but HHH pulls him back down for a Pedigree as JR is losing his mind on these big moves. HHH tries to get up but Henry throws powder in his eyes. A blind HHH goes up but can't see the belt. Rock goes up as well but it's Chyna with a low blow, allowing HHH to pull down the belt for the win.

Rating: A+. This was a history making match as these two are officially the future and it was time for Rock to ascend to the top of the company.

The match is one of my all time favorites and it's an overlooked masterpiece because of the series these two had in 2000. These two went to war and had Madison Square Garden, the smark capital of the world, eating out of the palm of their hand. That's only happened a handful of times ever and this was one of the best ever.

As for the match itself it worked for a variety of reasons. More than anything else though it was due to the ladder being a prop for the guys rather than the focus of the match. The story built around the leg injury and the drama instead of the big spots. It's very rare that you get a ladder match like this anymore and the match is absolute required viewing as a result.

WWF World Title: Undertaker vs. Steve Austin

Do you really need more of an explanation than that? If you've never seen the video for this set to Highway to Hell, make sure to check it out as it's one of the best ever. The basckstory is Undertaker wants the title back and might be in league with Vince in order to do so. He's also guaranteed that Kane will NOT interfere in this match. Taker is a tweener at this point as he has all the characteristics of being evil but hasn't made the turn yet.

Austin fires off right hands in the corner to start but Undertaker throws him into the corner to take over. A clothesline gets two on Austin and there's a double bird. They trade arm control until Austin takes him down with a drop toehold (!) into a hammerlock. Taker fights out of an armbars and whips Austin into the ropes for the spot that changes the entire match: Taker ducks down and gets kicked in the face, but the challenger's head snaps up and rams into Austin's chin, breaking his jaw and knocking him silly for the rest of the match.

Taker hits a quick suplex and a hot shot as Austin is still getting his head together. Some punches in the corner put Austin down again but Steve pulls him to the floor and rams Taker's leg into the apron. It goes

around the post as well before Austin takes him back inside before being taking the jumping clothesline. Old School is countered with a hip toss off the top and Austin stomps away on the leg.

Kane pops up at the entrance but Undertaker tells him to go back. The brawl keeps going but Austin goes to the floor to make sure Kane is gone. A somewhat sloppy chokeslam brings Austin back in but he clotheslines Taker to the floor. They fight into the crowd with Taker backdropping Austin onto the concrete. Back to ringside with Austin being rammed back first into the post, making JR scream that Austin may be paralyzed. That would be two years in a row if true.

Austin fights out of the corner but gets sent back first to the apron again. Back to the floor and Taker loads up the announce table which is always scary. He chokes Austin out on the table and goes up top for a HUGE legdrop off the top but the table DOESN'T BREAK! Austin slides off the table and the crash looks great. Back in and Austin is just gone but he kicks out at two. Austin gets up a boot in the corner and they clothesline each other down again.

Back up and Austin wins a slugout but there's almost nothing behind his punches. There's the Thesz Press and the (lacking middle fingers) elbow. Austin is whipped hard into the corner and tries a Stunner but Taker falls backwards in an awkward fall for two. Taker comes back with a chokeslam but the tombstone is countered into a very ugly sequence culminating in Austin being crotched. A Russian legsweep puts Austin down and Taker loads up Old School, but Austin crotches him on the top and the Stunner retains the title.

Rating: B-. The injury crippled them out there as Austin was totally out of it for about 90% of this match. The match isn't terrible but it's way below what they were shooting for and what the fans were expecting. It was a good idea to keep Kane out of this and it keeps Taker's character ambiguous which is the right call here. That injury just stopped everything cold here though and dragged the match way down.

Post match Taker hands Austin the belt and walks away to stand next to Kane in the entrance.

Overall Rating: A-. This was built up as one of the biggest Summerslams of all time and that's exactly how it comes off. Everything feels like a big deal and there's a masterpiece with the ladder match. The main event was a bit disappointing but considering the injury it's really quite good. It's definitely a show worth seeing with the WWF putting their foot down on WCW's neck and knowing they were on fire.

Ratings Comparison

Val Venis vs. D'Lo Brown

Original: B

Redo: C+

Oddities vs. Kaientai

Original: C-

Redo: C-

Jeff Jarrett vs. X-Pac

Original: B

Redo: C

Marc Mero/Jacqueline vs. Sable/Edge

Original: F

Redo: C-

Ken Shamrock vs. Owen Hart

Original: B-

Redo: B

Mankind vs. New Age Outlaws

Original: D+

Redo: D+

HHH vs. The Rock

Original: A+

Redo: A+

Steve Austin vs. Undertaker

Original: B-

Redo: B-

Overall Rating

Original: B

Redo: A-

Most of the matches are rated higher and the overall rating is lower.
Sounds like one of my old reviews.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/08/01/history-of-summerslam-count-up-1998-the-biggest-summerslam-ever/>

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