

Royal Rumble Count-Up – 1991: War Profiteering At Its Finest

Royal Rumble 1991

Date: January 19, 1991

Location: Miami Arena, Miami, Florida

Attendance: 16,000

Commentators: Gorilla Monsoon, Roddy Piper

So it's 1991 now and the US is at war (kind of). Therefore, the main event here, other than the Rumble of course, is Warrior defending the world title against Slaughter. This is a major changeover from the old Rumble formula which was a bunch of nothing matches followed by the big battle royal to close the show. Well at least on PPV that is. This would become the norm after this (other than in 1992) so let's get to it.

We open with the national anthem to really hammer home the AMERICA ROCKS theme.

We get the usual list of a bunch of people in the Rumble.

Piper goes on one his big America rants about how much he loves the troops.

Rockers vs. Orient Express

The Express are Kato and Tanaka. Kato is a white guy named Paul Diamond in a mask pretending to be a Japanese guy. Shawn gets jumped to start and hit with a big double backdrop. Marty dropkicks Kato to the floor and superkicks Tanaka down as the Rockers take over. The Rockers hit stereo suicide dives to take the Express (popular names for tag teams no?) down on the floor.

The crowd is LOVING the Rockers here because they're AMERICAN! Jannetty and Kato start things off with Kato getting caught in a headlock. Things speed up already and Marty controls with a headscissors on the mat. That

gets turned into a backslide for two for Jannetty and we have a standoff. Marty makes the Express collide with each other before working on Tanaka's arm.

Shawn comes in off the top with another shot to the arm but Tanaka comes back with a kick to the face and a chinlock. We get an overly complicated running the ropes spot which results in the Express having their heads rammed together. It's still Tanaka vs. Shawn here and we go from a chinlock to a sleeper by Shawn. Marty tries to come in for no apparent reason, allowing Kato to blast Michaels in the back to give the Express control for the first time.

Everything breaks down and we get multiple do-see-do sequences, finally resulting in the Express being rammed into each other and being sent to the floor. Shawn busts out a kind of prototype 619 before the Rockers dive on both members of the Express in a cool spot. Back to Kato vs. Marty and we hit another chinlock. Shawn comes back in for a vertical suplex but Tanaka breaks up a monkey flip by guillotining Shawn from the apron.

Tanaka comes in and we get the World's Greatest Tag Team spot of Tanaka jumping over Kato's back to land on Shawn's back as Shawn is draped over the ropes. A shot to Shawn's throat keeps him down and it's off to the nerve hold. Things slow down a lot as Kato comes in to chop away. A superkick puts Shawn down again (how appropriate) but he comes back by slamming Tanaka's face down into the mat.

The place is really getting into the Rockers here as Kato takes his belt off. The Express tries to clothesline him with it but Shawn dives onto the belt to ran both Express members into each other. Hot tag brings in Marty to clean house and a powerslam gets two on Kato. Tanaka breaks up a backslide attempt so Shawn trips up Kato to retaliate. Everything breaks down again and Tanaka breaks up the Rocket Launcher. Kato slingshots Marty into a Tanaka chop and Jannetty is in trouble. They load it up again, but Shawn blasts Tanaka, allowing Marty to counter the slingshot into a sunset flip on Tanaka for the pin out of nowhere.

Rating: B+. This would have been a masterpiece if they had cut out a

minute or two of the chinlocks. Still though, this follows the Nitro formula to the letter: take four small guys, give them a long time, get an exciting match. That's the perfect choice for an opener and it worked well here. The Rockers would continue to be awesome for the rest of the year until splitting in December in the famous Barber Shop incident.

Macho Man wants a shot at the winner of the title match. Slaughter has agreed to this idea for some reason, and Sherri is on her way to the arena to get Warrior to agree to the same.

Here's Sherri on the platform (yeah back then they had an interview platform along with the one in the back) to call out Warrior. Savage is watching in the back and Sherri takes forever to get Warrior to come out. She begs the patriotic Warrior and tries to seduce him (oh dear that's a terrifying thought) and gets on her knees, only to have Warrior shout NO. Savage LOSES IT in the back over this. Somehow these segments took like seven minutes.

Big Bossman vs. Barbarian

This is part of a storyline that worked quite well until the ending. Rick Rude had insulted Boss Man's mother, but Boss Man was told he had to beat every member of the Heenan Family before he got a match with Rude. Unfortunately Rude left the company before Boss Man got to him so Boss Man got Mr. Perfect at Mania...but he didn't win Perfect's IC title and that basically ended the storyline. Still though, the build was good and it gave Boss Man something to do for months. The eventual payoff was him literally dropping a big metal ball on Heenan's ribs.

Anyway Barbarian pounds away to start but gets kicked in the head and elbowed down. They head to the floor for Boss Man to send Barbarian into the post before heading back inside. Barbarian goes up but jumps into a punch, sending him right back to the floor. Barbie suplexes him down and punches Boss Man in the face, knocking him into the ropes where his feet get tied up.

Barbarian pounds away a bit before ramming Boss Man back first into the post. Off to a bearhug by Barbarian followed by an elbow for two. Back to the bearhug for a little bit longer until Boss Man headbutts (bad

stereotypes!) his way out. A splash in the corner misses and Barbarian gets two off a rollup, only to have Boss Man get the same off a clothesline. They hit head to head and both guys go down.

Barbarian is on his feet first and goes up and hits his top rope clothesline for two. There's the Boss Man Slam but Boss Man walks around before covering, allowing Barbie to grab a rope. An awkward looking piledriver puts Boss Man down for no cover again. Barbarian goes up for a cross body of all things but Boss Man rolls through it for the pin.

Rating: C. This was a fine match but the ending is kind of weird. I have no idea why they didn't have the Slam end the match here but for some reason it kept going for another minute or two afterwards. Still though, decent enough match and Boss Man was just CRAZY over at this point. The hot crowd helped a lot here.

Slaughter and General Adnan rant for a bit and say Slaughter is winning the title tonight. For some reason while Slaughter is talking they shift to another camera so he has to turn ninety degrees.

The Warrior isn't worried about Slaughter and says he'll give the orders tonight.

Quick recap on the world title match: Slaughter is a former American patriot and is now changing over to Iraq because he's that kind of a villain. Warrior is defending and that's about all there is to it.

WWF World Title: Sgt. Slaughter vs. Ultimate Warrior

Gorilla gives a disclaimer, saying that Slaughter and Adnan's views don't represent those of the WWF or most of America. If that was anyone other than Gorilla Monsoon, I'd say he wasn't allowed to speak for America, but Gorilla Monsoon speaks for me. There's a t-shirt idea in there somewhere. The belt is purple tonight in case you're wondering. Yeah Warrior went a bit nuts (shocking I know) with having multiple belt colors for some reason. The heels try to attack him with the Iraqi Flag but Warrior will have nothing of it and clotheslines them both down.

Slaughter gets the flag shoved into his mouth and Warrior pounds away. He

chokes Slaughter with said flag and chops away in the corner as Slaughter is in trouble. Warrior sends Slaughter into the corner for his over the buckle bump to the floor. Here's Sherri to trip up Warrior and draw him back up towards the entrance. Savage is waiting on Warrior and beats the tar out of the champion with light fixtures as Slaughter gets a breather.

The Sarge wisely stops the count a few times, allowing Warrior to get back in. Slaughter pounds away in the corner as he starts softening up the back for the Camel Clutch. Apparently the middle eastern moveset comes with becoming an Iraqi sympathizer. The crowd absolutely HATES Slaughter here and boos anything he does. Warrior gets sent into the buckle but they clothesline each other down. Naturally a single clothesline is enough to counteract that long run of offense by Slaughter and get us back to even.

Slaughter gets up first and puts on a bearhug for a LONG time. Warrior breaks it up but walks right into a backbreaker for two. There's the Camel Clutch but Warrior's legs are under the ropes. Warrior Warriors Up and beats Slaughter down but here's Sherri again to frenzy up the crowd. Warrior loads her up in the gorilla press and throws her onto a charging Savage in the aisle. Savage pops up again and blasts Warrior in the face with his scepter, allowing Slaughter to drop an elbow for the pin and the title, STUNNING the crowd.

Rating: D+. The match was dull for the most part but the heat was insane. The crowd audibly calls this BS and you can't really argue that point. Aside from that, this sets up Wrestlemania really well, as we need a REAL AMERICAN to take the title back. Pay no attention to the fact that the war had already been over by Wrestlemania.

Gorilla LOSES IT when the title change is announced.

Koko B. Ware vs. The Mountie

The crowd is still in shock at this point so here's a match to pass some time. Mountie has Jimmy Hart with him here and is doing the shock stick gimmick still. A lot of stalling to start things off here until Koko hits that dropkick of his. Ware cranks on the arm after Mountie hides on the floor for a bit. Mountie backdrops him to the floor in a big bump and

takes over. Hart gets in a shouting match with Frankie the parrot as this match drags on and on. Koko gets a quick two on a sunset flip as Jimmy argues with Frankie some more.

A piledriver is broken up by Ware but Mountie pounds away even more to stop the comeback. Koko grabs a neckbreaker and hits a few headbutts to put Mountie down. The missile dropkick (Koko hits the kick and lands on his feet. That's AWESOME) drops Mountie again and a cross body gets two. Koko hits the ropes a few times but charges into a....into a.....I think it was a choke takedown or something like that. Whatever it was it gets the pin for Mountie.

Rating: D. This match sucked but it was the only thing they could have done here. They had to do something to give the fans a chance to breathe after that previous title match and while it didn't really work, they made the right move here. Mountie would be IC Champion the next year while Koko would be in a tag team I believe.

Savage says he's the next WWF Champion and runs away with Sherri as he can hear Warrior pounding on the door.

Gorilla and Piper lament Warrior's loss.

Slaughter says he told us all he'd win.

Gorilla and Piper rants some more.

Some fans get to send messages to some American troops in the middle east.

We hear about Hogan going to various American armed forces bases because he's not allowed to go to Saudi Arabia at the moment. Thankfully Piper mentions that he and Hogan don't agree on everything.

We hear from some Rumble participants: Roberts, Earthquake, Valentine, Tornado, the LOD, Undertaker (still with Brother Love), Duggan, Martel, British Bulldog, Perfect (IC Champion here) and Tugboat.

Piper talks about having lunch with Virgil today. Remember that.

DiBiase and Virgil are ready to face Dustin and Dusty. Ted talks about having bought and paid for Virgil, who glares as DiBiase talks.

Ted Dibiase/Virgil vs. Dustin Rhodes/Dusty Rhodes

Dustin is BRAND new here as this is his first WWF match. It's also Dusty's last in the WWF/E for over fifteen years. This is the blowoff to DiBiase vs. Dusty which started at Summerslam with Ted buying Sapphire and taking her from Dusty. Sapphire left soon afterwards because she didn't want to be away from Dusty. Anyway the Rhodes Family takes over to start with elbows a go-go, sending the heels to a huddle on the floor.

Dustin, only 21 here, starts with Virgil who barely ever wrestled at this point. I mean it was like once every year or two. Dustin hits a clothesline and a dropkick to send Virgil (the real name of Dusty for you trivia geeks) to the floor as DiBiase is getting frustrated. Another clothesline puts Virgil on the floor again and Ted yells a lot. Off to DiBiase to backdrop the young gun but a second attempt results in a face jam.

The Rhodes dudes hammer DiBiase back and forth with elbows to send him to the floor as well. Here's Big Dust who puts on a sleeper but Virgil breaks it up. Back to Dustin for a dropkick for two, but a charging knee at Virgil misses to put Dustin down. Virgil stays on the knee and wraps it around the post, as does his boss. The heels try some double teaming, but Virgil accidentally clotheslines DiBiase. Ted beats the tar out of him, allowing Dustin to tag his dad. Said dad is rolled up for the pin almost immediately by DiBiase.

Rating: D+. Another dull match here but it was almost all for the ending and post match stuff. Like I said, the Rhodes guys were on their way out so they didn't have a chance at all in this one. Dusty stopped meaning anything months before this and it was the right move to go back to WCW for him where he could do what he wanted and book as well.

Post match we get the important part of the match. DiBiase yells at Virgil and says he's tired of having to save his worker. He tells Virgil to get the belt and wrap it around his boss' waist, but Virgil is mad. DiBiase keeps running his mouth, talking about how Virgil needs this job.

DiBiase turns his back on Virgil and turns into a belt shot to the head, drawing one of the handful of pops in Virgil's entire career.

Hogan is ready for the Rumble and wants the title from the un-American too. Gene tells Hogan that Slaughter might have just defaced the American Flag. Oh you know it's on now. Hulk goes into such a rant that he forgets the name of the guy America is at war with (Sadaam Hussein) in a semi-famous bit.

Royal Rumble

Bret gets #1 for the second time in four years. He and Neidhart are tag champions here and he gets to face Dino Bravo at #2. Feeling out process to start until Bret clotheslines Bravo to the apron. Bravo comes back but misses an elbow. We go to an annoying wide shot as Greg Valentine is #3. I think he's a face here but it was such an unmemorable turn that I can't remember if it had happened yet or not. Well he's fighting Bravo so I'd assume so. Actually he does a bit better than that by eliminating Bravo quickly.

Bret atomic drops Greg down and adds a clothesline for good measure but he can't get the elimination. Here's Paul Roma of Power and Glory at #4. Actually the team might have broken up by this point. Again they weren't that memorable, just like most of this time period aside from the top stars. Bret rams their heads together, causing Roma and Valentine to fight for a bit.

Here's Kerry Von Erich to give us I think three faces and one heel, or at least two faces a heel and a tweener. Bret misses an elbow drop off the middle rope and everyone pounds away on various people until Rick Martel is #6. Bret almost puts Martel out but Roma makes a save. Well no one ever accused him of being all that bright. Saba Simba (Tony Atlas as a tribal guy. It didn't last long) is #7 as things continue to go slowly. Von Erich puts the Claw on Martel and that's about the extent of the highlights.

To really liven things up, Butch is #8. That's actually not sarcastic as the fans do the Bushwhacker arm swing. Martel puts Simba out to keep us at an equal number of average guys and Bret. Don't get me wrong: these

guys are talented, but other than Bret, most of them never got above the midcard. Jake Roberts is #9 to go immediately after Martel and give us an actual feud (Martel blinded him, leading to an AWFUL blowoff match at Mania).

Martel bails under the bottom rope and Jake goes right after him through the ropes. Martel gets put on the apron and punched in the face as everyone else just punches people. Hercules is #10 to give us Power and Glory in the ring. Why would I have thought they were broken up? They had a match at Mania. Bret gets double teamed in the corner but nothing comes of it.

There are too many people in the ring at the moment at I think eight. Tito Santana is #11 as Roma misses a cross body to eliminate himself. FINALLY we get someone to clear some of these guys out with Undertaker coming in at #12. He's still this unknown monster at this point and would be that for years. Taker puts out Bret as soon as he gets there and beats up Von Erich for fun. That could have been a solid house show feud.

Jimmy Snuka is #13 as Taker throws out Butch. There are still way too many people in the ring, as we currently have Valentine, Tornado, Martel, Roberts, Hercules, Santana, Snuka and Undertaker. Taker chokes on Von Erich a bit in the corner before shifting over to Valentine. The freshly returned British Bulldog is #14 and guess what happens. The correct answer would be nothing, so here's Smash at #15. No one cares as Demolition would be done at Wrestlemania, so he's another nobody for all intents and purposes.

Good grief there are ten people in there now. Martel gets knocked to the apron and FINALLY puts Jake out to get us down a little bit. Superfly headbutts Martel and Hercules for a reaction from the crowd and Hawk is #16. STILL nothing of note happens and it's Shane freaking Douglas at #17. Taker FINALLY puts out Tornado and Hawk puts out Snuka to get the numbers down a bit.

No one is #18, which would later be revealed as Randy Savage, who isn't in the match because he's running from Warrior. This is called continuity, which you don't get enough of in wrestling today. Animal is

#19, allowing the LOD to double clothesline Taker out. Martel uses the distraction to knock Hawk out and we've got eight in there again: Santana, Martel, Smith, Smash, Animal, Hercules, Valentine and Douglas.

The ninth person in the ring and #20 overall is Crush, Ax's replacement in Demolition. Jim Duggan is #21. I'm not saying much between the entrances because there's nothing to talk about. Literally it's people pushing others on the ropes and a lot of punching. WAY too many people in the ring again and the match is really dull so far. Martel gets caught by Animal but gets out via a thumb to the eye. That's an exciting moment at this point.

Earthquake is #22, giving us an insane eleven people in the match at once. Animal staggers Quake with some clotheslines but a third misses, resulting in Animal getting dumped. Perfect is #23 to get us back to eleven in the ring at once. The first person he sells like a crazy man for: Duggan, but Jim gets eliminated by Perfect pretty quickly. I'm not going to bother listing everyone in there for awhile due to it being nearly impossible to tell. Seriously, that's how full the ring is.

FINALLY Hogan comes in at #24 and you know some people are going out now. It's Smash thrown out first and Hogan goes straight for Earthquake, who he was technically still feuding with at this point. Bulldog and Perfect have a very energetic slugout as Haku is #25. Hogan dumps Valentine after a near record breaking 44 minutes. Hogan finally gets his own shirt off as Martel and Haku fight.

Jim Neidhart is #26 as Earthquake dumps an exhausted Santana after thirty minutes. A bunch of heels work over Hogan in the corner but Shane Douglas breaks it up. In a semi-famous moment, Luke is in at #27 and is immediately dumped out by Quake after about four seconds. He immediately marches back to the locker room. Brian Knobs of the freshly debuted Nasty Boys is #28 and after doing nothing for awhile, he dumps Hercules.

Warlord is #29 and he goes straight for Davey Boy. Crush goes up on the corner to punch Hogan and deserves the elimination he gets for trying. Hogan clotheslines Warlord out as the ring is FINALLY emptying out a bit. Tugboat is #30, giving us a final group of Perfect, Tugboat, Knobs,

Douglas, Neidhart, Martel, Smith, Haku, Earthquake and Hogan. Quake and Tugboat go at it as Knobs dumps Douglas. Brian Knobs gets to eliminate two people? Really?

Tugboat goes after Hogan but only gets him to the apron. Hogan gets back in and clotheslines him out to get us to eight. Bulldog dropkicks Hennig off the ropes to the floor and Martel, who has been in there over 50 minutes, shattering the record, puts Neidhart out. Bulldog dumps Haku and we're down to five. Martel goes up top but gets crotched and clotheslined out by Smith. That puts us at a final four but Smith is put out before I can type out said four. We've got Knobs, Earthquake and Hogan. That's a step below Rude, Hennig and Hogan last year I'd think.

The heels double team Hogan of course and Quake splashes him down. The Earthquake hits Hogan but it's no sold as you would expect. Big boot puts Knobs out but Hogan can't slam the fat man. Quake hits an elbow drop and a second one as Hogan goes into his spasms. There's the powerslam, there's the Hulk Up, there's the big boot, there's the slam, there's the winning clothesline for Hogan.

Rating: D. This is one, if not the worst Rumble I've ever seen. It's just boring all around and there's no other word to describe it. There were at least three moments where there were TEN people in the ring at once. The prime option for the Rumble is about six to seven at most at a time, not freaking TEN. There was never a moment where this got exciting and it was really boring at times too. Not good at all here.

Hogan poses a lot and waves an American flag to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. The opener is really good but the rest of the show is mostly boring stuff. 1991 was a really boring time for the company and things wouldn't pick up until the end of the year when Flair and Undertaker gave some jolts of life into things. This didn't work for the most part though and it was a chore to sit through. Nothing to see here other than a really awesome tag match to open the show.

Ratings Comparison

The Rockers vs. The Orient Express

Original: A

Redo: B+

Big Boss Man vs. Barbarian

Original: B

Redo: C

Sgt. Slaughter vs. Ultimate Warrior

Original: D

Redo: D+

The Mountie vs. Koko B. Ware

Original: D

Redo: D

Ted DiBiase/Virgil vs. Dustin Rhodes/Dusty Rhodes

Original: B

Redo: D+

Royal Rumble

Original: D+

Redo: D

Overall Rating

Original: C-

Redo: D+

What was I thinking on that DiBiase match? I must have REALLY liked the angle, but it happened after the match.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/10/royal-rumble-count-up-1991/>

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