

Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2002: When HHH Was The Right Choice

Royal Rumble 2002

Date: January 20, 2002

Location: Phillips Arena, Atlanta, Georgia

Attendance: 12,915

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

This is the first step to things falling downhill, as we're a few months away from the Brand Split and things falling through the floor in quality. The main event tonight aside from the Rumble is Jericho defending his newly won Undisputed Title (which he won by beating the Rock and Steve Austin IN THE SAME NIGHT in case you didn't know that) against Rock. HHH is back in the ring tonight also (he may have fought on Smackdown before this but I don't think he did) so let's get to it.

The opening video has clips of various Rumble wins in a photo album kind of theme. The theme for this year's show is 30 Men, 1 Winner. I've heard worse ideas which we'll get too very soon.

Tag Titles: Spike Dudley/Tazz vs. Dudley Boys

I LOVE Stacy as the Duchess of Dudleyville. I never remember her looking better. Anyway, Spike and Tazz are defending here in a reign that I don't think anyone ever remembers. The Dudleys beat up Spike recently so he's in a neck brace. The Dudleys attack to start and hit the belly to back neckbreaker on Tazz on the floor. It's Bubba vs. Spike to start things off in a handicap match for all intents and purposes. Bubba rips the neck brace off and drops a big elbow.

Bubba shouts at Spike to get up as we get a very nice shot of Stacy. Tazz is back on the apron as D-Von hits a Hennig necksnap of all things. Bubba loads up a second brainbuster on Spike but gets countered into a Dudley Dog for no cover. The tag to Tazz is missed so Spike has to take a double flapjack instead. Spike avoids a headbutt from D-Von and makes the Dudleys clothesline each other. Hot tag brings in Tazz to clean house

with suplexes. A big boot to Bubba's head sets up a top rope cross body by Spike for two. Stacy interferes and gets put in the Tazmission. D-Von gets caught in the same hold and the champions retain.

Rating: D+. I have no idea what the point of this being on PPV was as it barely broke five minutes. Nothing with Stacy in the Dudley attire can be bad, but this came about as close as you can get. Actually scratch that as it wasn't so much bad but just short. I have no idea why this wasn't on Raw or something like that. Tazz would be retired very soon after this due to a horrible neck.

We immediately go to a recap of Regal vs. Edge which is based on Regal using brass knuckles over and over again. Edge got fed up with it and beat up a lot of people with a chair.

Edge has a chair with him tonight to counter the knuckles. Apparently he broke Regal's nose recently.

Intercontinental Title: Edge vs. William Regal

Edge is defending. The referee checks Regal over and over again for knuckles and finds them in his trunks. Well you can't say he didn't do his job. The referee stupidly puts them on the ring post instead of like, giving them to someone to take to the back or something. Edge pounds away to start and chokes with his boot in the corner. He goes after Regal's bad nose as Lawler claims conspiracy.

Regal comes back with a clothesline but Edge kicks him in the back to put both guys down. Being the British dude that he is, Regal suplexes Edge down for two. Make that four. Uh six. Yet somehow that isn't three. Off to an arm trap chinlock followed by a hard forearm to put the champion down again. A double arm powerbomb hits Edge for two and they head to the apron. Edge busts out a DDT onto said apron, further injuring Regal's nose.

Back in and they ram heads to put both guys down as the match continues to drag at a slow pace. Edge wins a slugout and takes Regal down with a spinwheel kick and a suplex for two. Regal suplexes him down as well, only for Edge to hit a big old clothesline for two more. The Regal

Stretch goes on out of nowhere but Edge reverses into a terrible version of his own to no avail. A top rope spinwheel kick puts Regal down but he finds another set of brass knuckles. Instead of swinging them though, he pulls the referee in the way of Edge's spear. Regal clocks Edge and wins the title.

Rating: D+. This didn't click at all. Regal didn't seem interested in selling at all and Edge wasn't ready to carry a match by himself yet. He was getting to the point where he could but it would take a summer of feuding with Eddie to get him up to that point. Regal wouldn't really do anything with the belt other than lose it to RVD. Nothing to see here.

Women's Title: Trish Stratus vs. Jazz

Jacqueline is referee for absolutely no apparent reason and Trish is defending. Jazz is basically being a bully and has injured Trish's hand coming into this. Jazz jumps Trish to start but misses a splash, giving Trish two off a rollup. A modified hot shot slows the champ down again and a legdrop gets two. Jazz works on the bad hand for a bit but Jackie pulls them out of the ropes. Jackie of course makes it all about herself and won't count a cover on Trish. Stratusfaction hits out of nowhere for two and Jazz is up a few seconds later, basically no selling it. Trish hits a bad looking running bulldog to retain.

Rating: D. It was short, it was sloppy, the ending was stupid and Jackie was in it. What other kind of grade do you expect here? Stratus was starting to get better but it would take another year and Lita before she got amazing. Jazz was a pretty stupid pick to bring over to WWE as no one remembered her and she didn't have the looks to back up any lack of hype. Bad match here.

Flair says he'll win.

We recap Vince vs. Flair. Flair debuted after Survivor Series as the new co-owner of the company and has driven Vince crazy since. This led up to a street fight tonight between the two of them tonight which isn't as big a deal as they were shooting for I don't think. The highlight of it was Vince dressing up as Flair and saying destroying lives turned him on.

Ric Flair vs. Vince McMahon

Remember this is a street fight. Vince shoves him down to start and struts, so Flair punches him down and struts as well. Flair wins a chop battle in the corner (duh) so Vince goes to the eyes to escape. There's the Flair Flop followed by a Flair Flip in the corner as Vince is in full control. We head to the floor and get our first weapon shot, with Vince pounding on Ric with a metal Keep Off sign.

There's a trashcan shot to the head and Flair is busted open. How thin must the skin on his forehead be? Anyway, Vince steals a camera from someone to take a picture of Flair's cut before we head back inside. Since he's a jerk, Vince starts working over the knee in (less skilled) Flair fashion. The leg is wrapped around the post and Vince puts on a Figure Four that Dusty Rhodes would be jealous of.

Flair turns the hold over and Vince IMMEDIATELY lets go of the hold. So not only is he better at it than some wrestlers, he's also smart. Never let it be said that Vince doesn't know what he's doing. Vince bails to the floor and grabs a lead pipe that he used to bust Flair open in the build up to the match. Flair catches him coming in with a low blow and pounds away on the floor.

Vince takes a monitor shot to the head and in a weird spot, we see a replay on the monitor on the table as the live match goes on. Vince is busted open now and we head back inside. Scratch that as we go back outside immediately where Flair's family takes pictures of Vince's cut. Set it up earlier, pay it off later. Good move. Back in and Flair kicks him low again just because he can, cracks him in the head with the pipe and ends it with the Figure Four.

Rating: C+. At the end of the day, this match makes as much sense as almost anything you'll see. Vince controlled at the beginning, but at the end of the day he's a boss and Flair is a veteran wrestler and athlete. It makes sense for him to be able to shrug that off and destroy Vince with relative ease once he got the upper hand. On top of that we got some good blood and Vince getting hit in the balls so how can this not be entertaining?

Stephanie talks trash about everyone else in the Rumble and runs down Debra as well. Austin walks up and WHAT's her away. Cole gets a bit of it too. This is when the bit was brand new and still kind of funny, as opposed to now when it ruins almost every serious promo.

No highlight package for the world title match? For those of you not around in 2002 (LUCKY!), Jericho won the title in December, beating Rock along the way. It makes sense for Rock to get the first shot, especially since they feuded over the end of the year.

WWF World Title: The Rock vs. Chris Jericho

Jericho still has both titles because HHH wasn't there to win the first Undisputed Title and get the new belt. Rock decks him immediately and the champ heads to the floor, only to run back in and get punched some more. Jericho misses a charge and hits the post but pulls off a hot shot out of nowhere to give himself a breather. They trade strikes in the corner before Jericho hits a spinwheel kick to Rocky's arms for two.

A suplex gets two for Jericho and for some reason Rock's left thumb is sticking out. The champ unhooks a buckle but can't get the Walls. A missile dropkick gets two on Rock and it's off to the chinlock. That goes on for a good while so Chris goes up again, only to get crotched and superplexed. A belly to belly suplex gets two for Rock but Jericho clotheslines him down and hits the Lionsault. Due to high reasons of arrogance, Jericho waits forever to cover and fights with the referee after getting two.

Another dropkick attempt by Jericho is caught in a Sharpshooter, but here's Lance Storm for a distraction while Jericho taps. Christian comes in as well and is promptly punched out by Rock. Jericho hits a Rock Bottom on Rock for two and the frustration begins. The champ loads up a People's Elbow but Rock nips up and sends Jericho out to the floor.

Both guys are rammed into both announce tables before Jericho's Rock Bottom attempt is countered into an AWESOME looking Rock Bottom by Rock from one table through the other. That only gets two back inside before Jericho counters another Rock Bottom into the Liontamer (yes I said Liontamer instead of the Walls). Ok now it's the Walls, which allows Rock

to make the rope.

The jumping clothesline takes the referee down by mistake, allowing Jericho to blast Rock with the belt. Another referee slides in and gets two off that and Rock DDTs Jericho down. Rock covers...and Nick Patrick won't count. There's a Rock Bottom for his efforts and a People's Elbow for Jericho but there's no referee. Rock checks on Hebner, allowing Jericho to hit him low, send him into the Chekov's Gun in the shape of an exposed turnbuckle. All that plus a rollup with his feet on the ropes is enough for Jericho to retain the title.

Rating: B. This took awhile to get going but once things picked up it turned into what you would expect from Rock vs. Jericho in a nearly 20 minute match. The overbooking worked here as Jericho needed something to boost him up to Rock's level, which is what you're supposed to do as a heel. Good stuff here and a very fine title match.

Shawn Michaels, in a really stupid looking Texas flag shirt, is at WWF New York. He picks Taker or Austin to win the Rumble.

Video on the Rumble. The main picks to win are Taker, HHH, Angle and Austin.

Royal Rumble

Rikishi and Goldust are #1 and #2 respectively and we've got two minute intervals. Goldie walks around Rikishi to start and gets punched in the face for his efforts. Rikishi knocks him around for a bit but can't quite drop the big load on Goldie's chest. A backdrop puts Goldust on the apron and Boss Man is #3, making it 2-1 against Rikishi. Goldust gets punched in the face but Boss Man pounds Rikishi into the corner. The heels explode after a long one minute partnership.

Bradshaw is #4 and hopefully he can pick things up a bit. He beats up everyone as Rikishi loads up the Stinkface on Boss Man. A superkick and a clothesline put Boss Man out and there's a Samoan Drop to Bradshaw. Goldie pounds away on Bradshaw in the corner and gets powerbombed for his efforts. Lance Storm is #5 and absolutely nothing of note happens until Al Snow (on Tough Enough at this point) is #6. Bradshaw kills Storm with

the Clothesline as the fans want Head.

Billy of Billy and Chuck is #7 and we're still waiting on something to happen. The fans are still into this at least so it's not a failure at this point. Storm and Snow fight to the apron with Snow superkicking Lance to an elimination. Billy dumps Bradshaw and Undertaker is finally #8 to pick things up a bit. A chokeslam kills Billy (the third in the series, not starring Uma Thurman) and another one puts out Goldust. Snow and Rikishi are dumped out and Billy follows them, leaving Undertaker alone to a big reaction. He's evil here in case you're not up on Taker history.

Matt Hardy is #9, which is interesting as Taker injured both Hardys and Lita. The redhead gets in along with Matt and helps him take the big man down via a low blow. Matt hits a Twist of Fate and stomps away but can't get Taker out. Naturally Jeff Hardy is #10 because that's how the TOTALLY RANDOM draw works in the Rumble.

Taker slugs down one of the best tag teams ever in just a few seconds, only to get caught in the Twist/Swanton combo. Again, why would you use moves that keep a giant on the mat? Not that it matters as Poetry in Motion is caught and Jeff is easily thrown out. The Last Ride kills Matt and he's gone too, leaving Taker alone again. The clock during that segment was REALLY long too as they were roughly three minutes each to get the whole segment in.

Maven from Tough Enough is #11 but Lita is on the apron. Taker PUNCHES her down, drawing the Hardys back in. Taker dumps both of them again, but Maven dropkicks Undertaker in the back and eliminates him in arguably the biggest surprise elimination ever in the Rumble. The look on the Dead Man's face is hilarious as he has absolutely no emotion at all. He calmly turns around, gets back in the ring, and mauls Maven, sending him through the ropes to the floor. A HUGE chair shot cracks Maven's head and the beating continues until Scotty 2 Hotty is #12.

Taker punches Scotty down and throws Maven back in to eliminate him, which under old Rumble rules would count. The beating goes into the crowd as there's nothing in the ring at the moment. Christian is #13 but has no

one to fight because Scotty is still down. Instead we go to the back where Maven is rammed face first into a popcorn machine. Taker eats a handful of popcorn and finally leaves Maven alone.

Scotty gets in and walks into a DDT as DDP is #14. Nothing of note continues to happen until Scotty superkicks Page through the ropes to the floor and hits the Worm on Christian. Page sneaks back in and throws Scotty out as Chuck is #15. They all beat on each other for a bit with Christian and Chuck teaming up for a bit. Godfather, now the owner of an escort service in an attempt to salvage the gimmick, is #16 and brings out 12 good looking women with him. Page is eliminated off camera during this.

With Godfather in the ring after about 15 seconds due to dancing, Albert is #17. He's the Hip Hop Hippo at this point and lasts about 45 seconds before being tossed by the villains. Godfather is dumped soon thereafter, and here's Saturn at #18. Chuck and Perry slug it out as the fans cheer for the Ho's leaving. Nothing happens again, until Austin is #19. Chuck is the first victim, getting stomped down in the corner. There goes Christian, Saturn gets a Stunner, Chuck is eliminated, Saturn is dumped, Christian gets thrown back in, Stunned and thrown out again, Chuck gets the same as Christian, and Austin takes a breather.

Val Venis is #20 (and also returning) and things go about as you would expect, although Val does get in some offense and survives until Test is #21. A double teaming lasts for a bit until Austin remembers who he's fighting and dumps both guys in a few seconds. Austin does his watch bit when no one is in the ring with him. Notice the difference between the big stars and the regular guys: the big ones are CONSTANTLY trying to keep the audience entertained instead of letting them die.

Speaking of entertaining the crowd, HHH is #22. The entrance takes about a minute and a half, they stare at each other for about twenty more seconds, and the slugout only lasts for a few seconds until Hurricane is #23. Luckily for him, the legends knock each other down so Hurricane can try a double chokeslam. The look on Austin's face is hilarious as the two of them dump Hurricane with ease.

Austin and HHH chop each other in the corner until Faarooq is #24 and lasts about that many seconds. Mr. Perfect makes a surprise return at #25 to a big surprise reaction from the audience. He looks a bit, shall we say, tipsy here. Perfect chills on the floor a bit as JR makes a mistake, saying Perfect debuted at the Rumble in 1993. In reality he was #4 in 1989. Austin and HHH double team Perfect to no avail so here's Angle at #26, drawing the rare double chant of YOU SUCK WHAT.

HHH and Angle pair off as do the other two guys and the match slows down a bit. Kurt starts suplexing people but can't dump HHH because Austin makes the save due to reasons of a big ego. Big Show is #27 in his one piece women's swimsuit. Angle gets chokeslammed so Austin and HHH double team the big man to limited avail. HHH saves Angle, presumably because he wants Kurt's help to get Show out. Makes sense I guess.

Show dominates everyone until Kane is #28. HHH gets chokeslammed so we can have our battle of the giants. Jerry: "They're not getting any smaller are they JR?" Uh yeah Jerry, actually they are. They do the double chokeslam spot but Kane kicks Show low and picks him up, slamming him to the floor. AWESOME display of strength there, but Angle immediately dumps Kane to get us back down to four.

Van Dam is #29 and hits a Five Star on Angle who is down from something we didn't see. Everyone but HHH gets kicked down so he hits a Pedigree to put Van Dam down. Booker T is #30, giving us a final group of Booker, RVD, Angle, Perfect, HHH and Austin. Booker throws out RVD without having to do anything else thanks to the Pedigree. We get a Spinarooni, followed by a Stunner and elimination to get us down to Austin, Angle, HHH and Perfect.

Austin hits a slingshot into the post on HHH who walks into an Angle Slam. Angle rolls some Germans on Austin and the C/Kurts try to dump Austin. Austin hits some HARD right hands to break that up but as he tries to dump Perfect, Angle runs up and dumps the Rattlesnake. Austin pulls Perfect to the floor but Kurt sends Austin into the steps to break it up. Steve still isn't done as he comes back in with a chair for all three guys. Eh he's Austin so he can get away with it.

Angle accidentally clothesline Hennig but doesn't eliminate him. There's the PerfectPlex (BIG pop for that) to Kurt but HHH dumps Perfect a second later. Angle and HHH stare each other down and the Game pounds away on him to take over. Kurt gets HHH to the apron but can't get the win. HHH chokes away but charges into a backdrop, sending him to the apron. Kurt makes the classic mistake of not making sure the other guy is out and gets clotheslined to the floor, giving HHH the Rumble. For you trivia guys, this is the longest Rumble ever to date, even going 11 seconds longer than the 40 man version.

Rating: C+. This has some very bad spots in it but the rest of the stuff is solid all around. Once Austin gets in there things pick up a lot, but the 18 guys before him don't do much. Taker's elimination came too fast which hurt things here, as there was no one of note from #9 until Austin at #19. Still though, the good stuff here was good enough to check this out, but you might want to fast forward some parts of it.

Overall Rating: B-. This is a pretty good but certainly not great show. 2002 was a bad year for the company on Raw and things were clearly starting to look weak here. The main problem was the lack of elevation of anyone new to the main event in the year, as the main events for almost every PPV were people who had been there before. There's nothing on here that's required viewing but there's also nothing terrible on here either. Check it out but don't expect to be blown away.

Ratings Comparison

Spike Dudley/Tazz vs. Billy and Chuck

Original: C-

Redo: D+

William Regal vs. Edge

Original: C-

Redo: D+

Trish Stratus vs. Jazz

Original: D+

Redo: D

Ric Flair vs. Vince McMahon

Original: D+

Redo: C+

Chris Jericho vs. The Rock

Original: B+

Redo: B

Royal Rumble

Original: C-

Redo: C+

Overall Rating

Original: B-

Redo: B-

Yep, about the same for the most part here.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/21/royal-rumble-count-up-2002-game-on/>

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