

Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2004: A Performance For The Forgotten Ages

Royal Rumble 2004

Date: January 25, 2004

Location: Wachovia Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 17,289

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

This is the show where you can really see the next generation rising up. The main events other than the Rumble are Lesnar vs. Holly and HBK vs. HHH. Ok so maybe the next generation only comes up in the Rumble. Other than that we don't have much going on here but this show is all about Benoit in the Rumble. Let's get to it.

The opening video talks about Shawn vs. HHH because that's what people are watching the ROYAL RUMBLE for right? The theme of the video is that things can change in the blink of an eye.

Raw Tag Titles: Dudley Boys vs. Evolution

Flair and Batista are defending here and this is a tables match. Coach is ticked off at the Dudleys for putting him through a table six nights ago on Raw, because if there's one man you need to give a reason to be a heel, it's COACH. Batista makes fun of the Eagles because he hasn't broken through to the other side of the glass ceiling yet. The fight starts in the aisle as you would expect. This is one table to a finish, meaning only one guy has to go through to end it.

Bubba slides in a table but shoves it hard enough that it slides across the ring and hits Batista in the ribs on the other side of the floor. Flair gets double teamed to start and caught in a powerslam by D-Von. There's a table set up in the ring but Batista moves it before Flair gets suplexed through it. D-Von hits a Cactus Clothesline on Batista as Flair

chops Bubba against a table in the corner.

Big Dave comes back in with some clotheslines to clean house but misses a charge into the post. The belly to back neckbreaker from the Dudleys puts him down and it's Flair getting double teamed again. According to JR, the Dudleys are the only team to win the (non-vacant) world tag team titles at the Rumble. Coach heads to the ring to distract the Dudleys and prevent a 3D to Flair. Flair saves Coach and Batista hits a spinebuster to put D-Von through a table to retain.

Rating: D. This match fell into the same trap that all bad tables matches fall into: the dull set of spots that fail until one works for the win. You rarely get something that gets around this through sheer carnage such as the match at the 2000 Rumble, but this was just terrible. I have no idea what they were going for here as the fans were disappointed and they only had four and a half minutes to get into it. Also: real smart WWE. This is the right way to start a show in Philadelphia: have some of the most famous ECW guys ever lose.

Cena raps about winning the Rumble when RVD comes in to steal the joke. Weed jokes are made. Josh Matthews looks like the king of all tools here.

There's an empty seat for Mick Foley in the front row.

Cruiserweight Title: Rey Mysterio vs. Jamie Noble

Rey is defending. This is during the Nidia is Blind phase which didn't do anything for anyone. They speed things WAY up to start with Jamie avoiding the 619 and launching Rey into the air to take over. The champ gets draped over the top rope for two and a hard kick to the back gets the same.

Jamie hooks a chinlock which shifts into a seated abdominal stretch. Rey fights up and hits a dropkick and a springboard rana followed by the sitout bulldog for two. He springboards into a gutbuster from Noble for two though and momentum shifts again. Nidia accidentally grabs Noble's foot, allowing Rey to hit the 619 and springboard legdrop....for the pin? Huh?

Rating: D+. This was fast paced while it lasted, but those three words are the key: while it lasted. This barely broke three minutes which simply isn't enough for a PPV title match. Unless I was missing it there was no sign of an injury or anything like that, but the match ends that fast. I have no idea what they were going for here but it didn't work in any way at all. That's a shame too because they were going well while it lasted.

Noble yells at Nidia post match.

We recap the battle of the Guerreros. Eddie was clearly the bigger star which was fine while they were champions, but once they lost the belts to the Bashams, Chavo blamed Eddie and turned on his uncle for losing his title. The Guerreros almost made up but they lost the rematch, after which Chavo let Eddie get double teamed by the Bashams. This was actually a pretty solid story despite how basic it was. Sometimes less is more. Oh and Kurt Angle was playing peacemaker and Chavo Guerrero Senior is in his son's corner.

Eddie Guerrero vs. Chavo Guerrero

Chavo bails to the floor before the bell and the fans are totally behind Eddie here. They fight over a lockup to start with no one being able to get an advantage. Chavo slaps Eddie in the face and now we're ready to go. We hit the mat for a bit before Eddie starts snapping off chops in the corner. Chavo shoulders him down and we have a standoff. They chop it out again and Eddie goes to the eye like a true Guerrero.

Back to the mat with Eddie working on the arm before Chavo nips up and hooks a rana to send them both to the floor. Chavo sends Eddie into the announce table to finally take over and get some of the aggression going. Back in and they get into a kind of MMA style brawl on the mat until Eddie hooks a cross armbreaker of all things. That goes nowhere so Chavo suplexes Eddie down for two, followed by the Three Amigos. Eddie counters a tornado DDT and hits Three Amigos of his own. Chavo is down so Eddie goes up and hits the Frog Splash for the pin. ANOTHER quick ending tonight.

Rating: C+. This was way better than the other matches, but this felt

like it was missing fifteen minutes or so. Three matches so far have combined to be about fifteen minutes long which is pretty lame for a modern PPV, even for the Rumble. This could have been a lot more, but the feud was completely done after tonight. Eddie would become #1 contender on the following Smackdown.

Eddie destroys Chavo post match in a pretty heelish display. Chavo gets busted open.

Ad for Mick Foley's Greatest Hits and Misses. That's the most entertaining part of the show so far.

Benoit likes his odds even though he's #1 in the Rumble. Evolution comes up and says Orton is going to win the Rumble. Flair says Benoit may be great, but this is about Evolution tonight.

We recap Hardcore Holly vs. Lesnar. Brock broke Holly's neck (legit) and Holly gets a world title shot out of it a year later. This is the textbook definition of the Rumble title shot where no one buys the champion as being in any danger whatsoever.

Smackdown World Title: Brock Lesnar vs. Hardcore Holly

Holly jumps Lesnar in the aisle and sends him into the post because he wants to break Lesnar's neck. We get a bell and Holly misses an elbow off the top to give Brock control. They head to the floor where Holly's back is rammed into the apron and Lesnar hooks a reverse body vice back inside. That goes nowhere so Brock hits a Shell Shock for two and it's right back to the hold.

We shift to a bearhug and then one of the most wicked overhead belly to belly suplexes you'll ever see. Off to a kind of rear naked choke by Lesnar to keep things dull. Holly makes his comeback with the dropkick and hits the Alabama Slam but goes for a full nelson and revenge instead of the title. Holly hooks the hold and goes to the floor with it but has to break the count. The F5 hits a few seconds later to complete the inevitable.

Rating: D. This was Brock Lesnar defending the world title against

Hardcore Holly on pay per view. If you can't figure out why this got the rating it got, I can't help you.

We recap HHH vs. HBK which is allegedly seven years in the making. I'm guessing THIS is supposed to be the FINAL blowoff to their feud instead of the classic in 2002.

Raw World Title: Shawn Michaels vs. HHH

HHH is defending and this is a last man standing match. They chop it out to start and punch each other in the corner a lot. Shawn tries a backslide before realizing that makes no sense here, so it's back to the chops. Michaels gets caught in a facebuster as things slow down a bit. A HARD whip into the corner has Shawn's back in trouble and a backbreaker makes it even worse.

Out of nowhere Shawn takes out the leg and hooks a Figure Four, because where would we be without a Flair tribute? That gets a five count so Shawn hits a chop block for a four. HHH low bridges Shawn and we head to the floor for a bit. HHH loads up the announce table but Shawn blocks a Pedigree attempt. They slug it out on the table with HHH getting knocked to the floor, drawing a bunch of booing from the bloodthirsty Philadelphia fans.

Back in and Shawn counters a Pedigree with a backdrop to the floor but he injures his back in the process. Shawn tries a springboard cross body to the floor but crashes through the table instead as only he can. Instead of letting the now busted open Shawn get counted out, HHH throws him back in for the count, which reaches seven. The champ pounds Shawn down a few times for a few counts, most of which don't get that far.

A fast spinebuster (literally, as Shawn was flying at HHH and it almost looked like a belly to belly instead of a spinebuster) gets about six. That's the problem with most last man standing matches: it's a big move then standing around for the count. That makes it very hard to get any kind of flow going to the match. HHH cracks Shawn in the back with a chair but Shawn gets up again. A Pedigree onto the chair is countered into a slingshot into the post, busting HHH open as well.

Now Shawn cracks HHH in the head with a chair, allowing HHH to do his weird “my head hurts and I’m not sure where I am” face. There’s the forearm followed by the nipup from Shawn, followed by an atomic drop and the top rope elbow. That gets about seven so Shawn tunes up the band, only to walk into a low blow to put both guys down. Shawn hooks a sleeper which eventually gets an eight count before walking into a DDT to put both guys down.

That gets a double eight count before we head to the corner. HHH tries a belly to back superplex but Shawn counters into a cross body for another double eight count. The Pedigree hits but it’s only good for a nine. Shawn pops up out of nowhere with some more Sweet Chin Music, putting both guys down for ten which keeps the title on HHH.

Rating: C-. The problem here is exactly what I said earlier: this was a lot of lying around. The last seven minutes or so had about five moves combined, as most of the match was “move, lay down, move, lay down, move, lay down.” The idea is supposed to be a ton of drama, but that didn’t happen here. Shawn would turn into a jerk in the next few weeks and insert himself in the Mania main event because of this ending.

Rumble video with a focus on Benoit.

The Fink is ready to start the Rumble but here’s Bischoff to run his mouth. He says that a Raw guy is going to win the Rumble because he’s respected as a GM. He runs down ECW, which brings out Heyman for a brawl. Cue Austin on his ATV to say that these two are both in violation of the law (he was called Sheriff Austin at this point) and wants to know who started it. Heyman and Bischoff: “HE DID!” Both guys get Stunners and the fans love it.

Goldberg, #30 in the Rumble, doesn’t get to talk because Lesnar comes in to interrupt him. Lesnar is called a coward, which will come into play later.

JR has to admit Foley is a coward because he isn’t here yet.

Royal Rumble

Benoit is #1 and the Intercontinental Champion Randy Orton is #2. Two minute intervals here again. They pound away on each other to start with Benoit taking him to the mat to stomp away. Mark Henry is #3 when he was a fat power guy with no direction at all. Allow me to be more specific: he's still with Teddy Long. Benoit gets double teamed for awhile until Tajiri is #4. These intervals don't seem to be two minutes or anywhere close to it.

The handspring elbow takes Orton down but Benoit rolls some Germans on Tajiri to take him down. Tajiri only gets two as I guess Benoit is conserving strength. Henry throws Orton to the apron but stops looking like an idiot. Bradshaw is #5 and he immediately clotheslines down everyone not named Benoit. Benoit takes offense to being left out and puts Bradshaw in the Crossface before pulling Bradshaw out. Eh he would get a nine month title reign stating in the summer so I feel no sympathy for him.

Rhyno is #6 as we're flying through this so far. He goes after the two starters as Tajiri fires off kicks on Henry. Tajiri gets a half Tarantula on Henry but Henry gets Gored, knocking Tajiri out in the process. Benoit clotheslines Henry out and we're down to three again. Matt Hardy is #7 and Benoit throws him to the apron almost immediately. In FAR less than two minutes, here's Scott Steiner at #8. Oh dear it's Scott Steiner at the Royal Rumble. This could be a disaster.

He starts firing off suplexes immediately but at least this time there are some t-bones to go with the belly to bellies. Benoit rolls some Germans on him as if to say THIS IS HOW YOU SUPLEX SOMEBODY. Things slow down a bit and here's Matt Morgan at #9. He takes Benoit down with a Batista Bomb takes Benoit down and pounds away on Orton in the corner.

The Hurricane is #10 and comes in off the top with a cross body to Hardy. He goes after Morgan for no apparent reason and is thrown out in less than twenty seconds. Morgan throws Hardy to the apron again but can't get him out. Booker T, complete with the stupid remix of his theme music with Booker singing, is #11. Booker immediately goes after Steiner in a revisiting of their WCW feud that no one was asking for.

Nothing of note happens until Kane is #12. This is after he buried Taker alive. For the first time. Steiner gets dumped by Booker during Kane's entrance. Kane starts firing off chokeslams and other various power moves for which he is well known. The clock runs down at #13 and there go the lights. A gong goes off and Kane PANICS. Booker uses the distraction to dump Kane and here's Spike Dudley at #13. He never makes it to the ring as Kane destroys him for setting off the gong.

Everyone tries to throw each other out while laying on the ropes until Rikishi is #14. Benoit dumps Rhyno to keep us at six people (Benoit, Orton, Rikishi, Booker, Morgan, Hardy) in the ring. Morgan gets a Stinkface and nothing else happens for a bit. Renee Dupree with the French Tickler is #15. In a surprising moment, Dupree actually knocks Matt out, only to be superkicked out by Rikishi a second later.

A-Train is #16 and goes right for Rikishi. Benoit avoids the yet to be named Carbon Footprint and dumps Morgan. I love that they're keeping the ring from getting full. Orton dumps Rikishi and Booker as Shelton Benjamin is #17. Benoit dumps A-Train during his entrance and Orton dumps Shelton a few seconds later to get us back to two. Orton pounds on him a bit but they crack heads to put both guys down.

Lamont, the announcer for Ernest Miller (complete with the music that would go to Brodus Clay eight years later), runs out to introduce the Cat at #18. After some dancing (and singing by Tazz), Orton dumps him out. Miller would be released in like two weeks. Kurt Angle is #19 and he might be a bit harder to get out. He's fighting for AMERICA here so the fans tell him he sucks.

Benoit and Angle destroy each other with chops and punches as only they can while Orton is content to chill in the corner. Rico, now in his Adrian Street phase, is #20. He fires off some kicks but lasts about as long as you would expect him to in a match with Orton, Angle and Benoit. The RK0 takes care of Rico as Benoit rolls a ton of Germans on Angle. Test is #21....and is nowhere in sight.

Orton RK0's Angle and we cut to the back to see Test unconscious. Austin sees someone off camera and says they're #21. The off camera man and

presumable attacker: MICK FREAKING FOLEY! Orton, the guy who spat in Foley's face and called him a coward, PANICS. The place goes nuts and Foley explodes on Orton, beating him half to death and hitting a Cactus Clothesline to put both of them out. This would lead to some AWESOME matches at Mania and Backlash which put Orton up to the world title in August.

Foley keeps beating on Orton as Christian is #22. Mick picks up the steps and BLASTS a security guy who tries to stop him. Orton comes back with two chair shots and fires back at Mick. They brawl up the ramp and Foley pulls out Socko, only to put it on Nunzio who comes in at #23. We haven't seen anything of the match for a while but I can live with that for a hot brawl like this. Orton kicks Foley low and runs as we go back to the ring.

Angle is getting double teamed as Nunzio is down on the floor. Big Show is #24 and apparently that's Tazz's pick. Thankfully he's in the singlet and shorts again instead of the one piece swimsuit. Angle immediately goes after him but Show throws everyone around. Jericho is #25 as he's in a weird phase of his career. He wasn't a main event guy anymore but he had feuded with everyone in the midcard already so he just kind of hung around and filled in spots on the card.

All four guys go after Big Show (who has a head like a typewriter according to Tazz) but they can't get him out. Charlie Haas is #26 but gets double teamed by Jericho and Christian. Currently we have Benoit, Angle, Jericho, Christian, Haas, Big Show and Nunzio who is on the floor. Jericho backdrops Christian out for the second year in a row as Billy Gunn is #27. Apparently this is a return for him. It's Fameassers all around and then things slow down again.

John Cena is #28 and that pop is growing at an alarming rate. Show stares him down so Cena throws Nunzio in to kill some time. Nunzio goes after Show for some reason but Cena takes over for him to make it fair. RVD is #29 to a big pop of his own. It's spin kicks all around until things settle down a bit. There's an FU to Angle and Goldberg is #30. The final group: Benoit, Angle, Big Show, Jericho, Nunzio, Haas, Gunn, Cena, RVD and Goldberg. At least the ring didn't fill up until the end so that's

not too bad.

Goldie spears a lot of people down to start before Nunzio jumps on his back like an idiot. Haas is put out and Nunzio takes a HUGE spear. Gunn is out as is Nunzio to get us down to seven. Goldberg loads up a Jackhammer on Show but Lesnar runs in with an F5 to break it up. Goldberg stares down Brock, allowing Angle to dump him out. All five remaining guys not named Big Show go after the one named Big Show but it still doesn't work.

Everyone hits their finishers on Show instead with Cena (Show's feud at the time) hitting the Shuffle instead of the FU, which I'm assuming they were saving for Mania. They try to dead lift Show and realize they screwed up by knocking a giant unconscious. Show shoves them all off and dumps Cena followed by Van Dam a few seconds later.

So it's Big Show, Benoit, Angle and Jericho as the final four. Jericho gets sent to the apron twice and manages to hang on before bulldogging Show down. The Walls go on Show and he taps but Angle breaks the hold up for no apparent reason. Show chokeslams Benoit down but chokeslams Jericho even further, sending him to the floor to get us to three. A side slam puts Angle down and there's another chokeslam to Benoit.

Show breaks up a German attempt from Angle but can't block an Angle Slam. There's a Slam to Benoit (it was a belly to back suplex but whatever) and the ankle lock to Show. Show taps again, but again it doesn't mean anything. The big guy rolls through the hold and eliminates Angle in the process, getting us down to two.

Benoit dropkicks Show but knocks him back into the ring by mistake. A chokeslam is countered into the Crossface and Show taps again, but you know the drill by now. Show shrugs it off and picks Benoit up in a chokeslam. Benoit grabs a front chancery though and pulls Show to the apron....then has him teetering on the ropes....AND BENOIT WINS! The crowd kept getting louder as Benoit pulled further and further. Awesome sequence there.

Rating: A. There were some slow spots but this was ALL about Benoit and I can't complain about that at all. The ending sequence here with all three

submission guys making Show tap was a cool idea and different from the ending to any other Rumble. They didn't throw a stupid curve here and made Benoit look like a star here, which is exactly what he was supposed to do. Great Rumble.

Overall Rating: B-. The Rumble is really REALLY good but the rest is horrible. Don't watch the rest of the show, but if you're a Benoit fan and can still sit through a long match of his, this is absolutely required viewing. Things would change a bit more the next year as two REALLY big names would be the stars of the Rumble, but that's not for another year. For now, this was all about Benoit and he nailed it.

Ratings Comparison

Evolution vs. Dudley Boys

Original: C

Redo: D

Rey Mysterio vs. Jamie Noble

Original: N/A

Redo: D+

Chavo Guerrero vs. Eddie Guerrero

Original: C+

Redo: C+

Brock Lesnar vs. Hardcore Holly

Original: D-

Redo: D

HHH vs. Shawn Michaels

Original: C+

Redo: C-

Royal Rumble

Original: A

Redo: A

Overall Rating

Original: C+

Redo: B-

Just as last time, the Rumble is the only thing worth seeing.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/23/royal-rumble-count-up-2004-he-who-must-not-be-named/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book on the History of the Royal Rumble at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00PZ1GR7E>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>