

King of the Ring 1993 (2015 Redo): Deja Vu, WWF Style

King of the Ring 1993

Date: June 13, 1993

Location; Nutter Center, Dayton, Ohio

Attendance: 6,500

Commentators: Jim Ross, Bobby Heenan, Randy Savage

Back when I was starting doing reviews, one of the first series I checked out was King of the Ring. Looking back at them, much like most of my original reviews, these things are HORRIBLE so it's time I do them again and make them a bit more polished. We'll start back in 1993, with of course the tournament itself and the rematch from Wrestlemania IX with Hulk Hogan defending the World Title against Yokozuna in an actually announced match. Let's get to it.

The opening video is a rundown of the brackets:

Bret Hart

Razor Ramon

Mr. Perfect

Mr. Hughes

Jim Duggan

Bam Bam Bigelow

Tatanka

Lex Luger

If you can't figure out the winner from here, you're not paying close enough attention.

The announcers make a huge deal out of this being the Heartland of

America. This was almost the tagline for the show.

All first round matches have fifteen minute time limits.

King of the Ring Quarterfinals: Bret Hart vs. Razor Ramon

Bret had a first round bye and Ramon beat Tito Santana. This is just after Ramon lost to the 1-2-3 Kid so you know what the fans are chanting. JR sounds extra excited tonight. Bret is announced as the #1 seed, which (in theory though never actually stated) means Ramon should be the #8 seed, putting him beneath guys like Mr. Hughes and Jim Duggan. Really? I don't think a single loss would drop him that far down.

JR mentions that Bret is a two time Tag Team and Intercontinental Champion and would like to make it a triple double. That's a very rare reference to the other King of the Ring tournaments that took place before the show aired on PPV or any TV whatsoever as far as I know. This is also somewhat connected to the King's Crown title, held by people such as Jim Duggan and Harley Race. That was introduced when Race won the second King of the Ring tournament in 1986, but the King's Crown winners had nothing to do with the King of the Ring. Bret is actually the defending King here, having won the last tournament in 1991.

Hart cranks on a headlock to start and they have a bit of miscommunication off an Irish whip but it doesn't screw up much. They hit the mat with Bret cranking on the arm as you can hear the energy in JR here. He's snapping off Hart Family facts and the brackets as only Ross can in these situations. Ramon scores with a hard clothesline but Bret goes right back to the arm to keep control. Nice power vs. technical story here so far.

Razor fights up again but gets caught in yet another armbar. Well he's consistent if nothing else. Bret charges into a boot and gets thrown shoulder first into the post to finally change control. Back in and Razor stomps in the hands and slaps Bret in the back of the head. Fall away slam gets two as the crowd is staying uninterested so far. A powerslam gets two for Razor, which doesn't make the most sense given that he had Bret in perfect position for a shoulder breaker to stay on the bad arm.

The Canadian avoids some elbows and starts up the Five Moves of Doom but gets sent chest first into the buckle. The Razor's Edge is countered as Bret kicks off the ropes into a small package for a VERY close two and the fans wake up to boo the referee. Razor loads up a belly to back superplex but Bret turns onto him for the pin to advance.

Rating: B-. This was fine but I would have liked the arm stuff to actually go somewhere. It's still a good match though as you had Bret working hard out there. However, you can see the major problems with tournament shows: it's kind of hard to get into the flow of a match when your matches have to be crammed into a pretty short time limit. You also can't let the guys do everything they need to do in one match because you might need to save stuff for later.

We recap Mr. Hughes and Giant Gonzalez teaming up to take Undertaker's urn. This would be one of the earlier instances of the 19,284 times this story took place. It did however include a great looking urn shot to Paul Bearer's head.

King of the Ring Quarterfinals: Mr. Hughes vs. Mr. Perfect

Hughes, a career bodyguard (almost literally. Once he switched to that gimmick, he didn't change a thing for the rest of his career, which last I heard is still going on in the indies), beat Kamala while Mr. Perfect took three times to beat Doink the Clown. Perfect is in a short lived face run here and takes Hughes down with an armdrag as we can see some empty seats pretty close to the ring. Heenan talks about all the things he did for Perfect to make him great and takes credit for the success he's had. Ross in that deadpan voice of his: "Wrong."

The big Hughes takes him down and cranks on the neck before just kicking Perfect in the jaw. Simple yet effective move for a simple yet effective character. Back to the neck crank and we get a quick word from Bret where he says he'd rather face Perfect for the wrestling abilities. It's very rare that someone actually has a preference for their opponent but it makes sense for Bret. That's not something you get in today's wrestling and I'd love to see it more. Hughes crotches himself on the ropes and gets backdropped down, setting up the neck snap. That's enough for Hughes

though as he blasts Perfect with the urn for the DQ.

Rating: D+. Again, there's only so much you can do when the winner is obvious and your opponent is Mr. Hughes. There's nothing wrong with him as an enforcer, but did anyone buy him as a potential winner here? The ending makes sense too as you had to keep him strong for Undertaker, but that didn't do this match any favors. Perfect looked great here though and there was some serious money in a face run with him as the awesome athlete who could wrestle a great match with almost anyone.

Mr. Fuji says Hogan cheated at Wrestlemania by taking advantage of Yokozuna after a twenty minute match. Apparently being an evil Japanese man takes away your ability to tell time. Yokozuna promises BANZAI.

King of the Ring Quarterfinals: Bam Bam Bigelow vs. Jim Duggan

Duggan beat Papa Shango and Bigelow defeated Typhoon. This is in Duggan's weird looking singlet phase. They slug it out to start as Heenan calls Duggan's career with the Atlanta Falcons an amateur run. Bigelow gets knocked to the floor but comes back in to use the power of fat to avoid being slammed. Duggan's ribs are hurt so we hit the bearhug. That goes nowhere, so Duggan hurts his ribs trying to slam Bigelow and gets caught in a bearhug.

Heenan tries to pepper things up by talking about Duggan being a quitter in Glenn's Falls, New York but it's not quite as good as hearing about the Duggan family history of fighting in taped fist matches in WCW. Seriously. The third attempt at a slam works but Duggan misses a charge into the corner, setting up the flying headbutt to give Bigelow the pin.

Rating: D-. This was horrible as Duggan was WAY past his expiration date, but to be fair this was his next to last match in the WWF, save for a one off Superstars squash. Bigelow wasn't the guy he used to be but he was still good enough as a monster to put people over. Thankfully they kept this short and did what they were supposed to do, even though the match sucked.

The Smoking Gunns and the Steiner Brothers are ready for their eight man tag later. That match is just there to give the fans a breather after the

World Title match and there's nothing wrong with that.

King of the Ring Quarterfinals: Lex Luger vs. Tatanka

Luger beat Bob Backlund and Tatanka beat Giant Gonzalez (by DQ of course) and both guys are undefeated coming in. Luger is forced to put a pad on his forearm with a metal plate inside. Tatanka tries to break up the posing but gets sent over the top like a schmuck. That's fine with him as he just turns the mirror over and starts chopping. A big chop sends Luger to the floor before hitting every stereotypical face move you can think of. Makes sense for a stereotypical character.

We hit the armbar as JR and Heenan argue over names. JR: "I never figured out why they call you Brain." Heenan: "Well why do they call you Jim Ross?" Tatanka stays on the arm so Savage puts over the tournament by saying the winner is equal to the WWF Champion. Yeah it's a stretch, but you have to say things like that to make people think they're watching something very important. Bigelow pops in to say he wants to face Tantaka.

The hammerlock stays on until Luger uses the free arm for an elbow to the jaw. Luger starts in on the ribs with a backbreaker and some slow motion elbows for two. We hit the chinlock with a knee in Tatanka's back and Luger brags to Heenan. They trade some rollups for two each with Heenan stopping to look at the crowd time after time. It's almost like he's trying to kill the clock. We hit four minutes to go and Tatanka goes on the warpath. Rating

A bunch of chops get two on Luger and a powerslam gets the same. Tatanka hits a top rope chop to the head for the closest near fall yet as the fans wake up a bit. He misses a high cross body though and we're at two minutes left. Luger hits a powerslam of his own for two but really doesn't seem interested in picking up the pace. There's a suplex for a delayed two and Luger is frustrated. Luger backbreakers him for two more and time runs out in an anti-climactic ending.

Rating: D. When Luger isn't trying, it's one of the most painful things you can see. Tatanka is a fine midcard gimmick but he went about as far as he could have ever gone. This is how you keep two guys strong though

and get the required bye. That's one thing I've never understood though: if you want to save time, why let one match go the time limit? Just do two faster matches with a fluke ending. Doesn't that balance things out? This would also be Luger's last major appearance before turning face as the new Mr. USA, so it might be better that he didn't have a great performance here.

Luger wants five more minutes but uses the distraction to knock Tatanka out with the forearm.

Here are the updated brackets:

Bret Hart

Mr. Perfect

Bam Bam Bigelow

BYE

Okerlund is with Hart and Perfect and of course Gene starts making trouble. He thinks Hart wants to face Perfect because it's an easier opponent. Perfect owes him one for Summerslam 1991 and it turns into an argument over whose father would win in a match. Stu's in ring career really isn't talked about that much due to his success as a trainer so that's kind of an odd thing to think about.

King of the Ring Semifinals: Mr. Perfect vs. Bret Hart

So this is a pretty well known match. Thirty minute time limit here and Bret has a taped up hand from Razor stomping on the fingers earlier. They go to the ropes to start and you can see fans leaving to get food. You horrible people. An early hiptoss sends Perfect flying and they hit the mat for some counters. Perfect gets back up and rips Bret's skin off with a chop in the corner.

Bret kicks him away and we hit the mat for a hard headlock from the Hitman. Perfect fights up for a crucifix but gets pulled right back into the headlock. After several moments, Perfect gets to his feet and drives a knee into the ribs to send Bret outside. He's nice enough to hold the

ropes open but kicks Bret as he comes back in. Some hard kicks to the head have Bret in more trouble and Perfect is clearly wrestling as the heel here.

Hart rolls outside and Perfect whips him hard into the barricade, right next to a cooler full of water and Diet Pepsi. Bret might have hurt his knee but you never can tell with him. Back in and a suplex and missile dropkick get two for Perfect and frustration starts to set in. That means bad things for Bret as Perfect gets more aggressive with the chops in the corner. Mr. goes up again but gets superplexed down for a close two as the fans are into this one.

Bret's knee is ok (to be fair it wasn't too hurt in the first place and Perfect didn't follow up on it) and he goes after Perfect's leg, setting up a figure four in the middle of the ring. A long crawl gets him over to the ropes but Bret takes him back into the middle again and cranks on the knee. Perfect escapes that as well and just throws Bret down by the hair. We hit the sleeper on Bret but again he's too close to the ropes. Perfect makes sure to hold until four like a villain is supposed to do.

Unlike a villain though, he puts the hold back on, wisely turning Bret away from the ropes. Perfect even throws his own foot on the ropes to channel his inner Flair. Hart gets up and sends Perfect face first into the top turnbuckle before just blasting him with a European uppercut. Now it's Bret throwing him down by the hair, sending Perfect into the post for that signature bump of his. Russian legsweep gets two for Hart and we hit the Five Moves of Doom.

Perfect smartens up again and grabs the injured hand to block the Sharpshooter with Heenan saying he taught Perfect to do that. Bret blocks a PerfectPlex attempt and suplexes Perfect over the top, sending them into a huge crash on the floor. Both guys get back in but Perfect goldbricks a knee injury and tries a small package, only to have Bret show him how it's done and reverse into a small package of his own for the pin, despite Perfect's shoulder clearly being up.

Rating: A. I think I like Bret's chemistry with Perfect better than his stuff with Shawn. These two just compliment each other so well and their

styles mesh, shall I say, perfectly. This is outstanding stuff with Perfect going old school and trying to cheat to win, only to get caught using one of Bret's tactics and getting pinned as a result. Trading knee injuries here was good stuff and the whole match is just great. Check it out and watch Summerslam 1991 while you're at it.

Perfect is livid with the referee but shakes Bret's hand post match.

So it's Bret vs. Bigelow for the crown.

Hulk Hogan is ready for Yokozuna and cuts the same promo you've heard him use for about ten years now. Manager Jimmy Hart doesn't like Fuji and Yokozuna putting down America though. Hart as Hogan's manager never fit for me and they never really gave a good explanation for why they were suddenly best friends. Of note here though, a lot of Jimmy's lines would be in the American Made song that he performed for Hogan in WCW.

WWF World Title: Hulk Hogan vs. Yokozuna

Hogan is defending in the Wrestlemania IX rematch. Ross, doing his job as a commentator, points out all of the Japanese photographers at ringside for this match. Keep that in mind. Heenan mentions Hogan trimming down, which is code for steroid trial. That's an understatement too as Hogan is probably 40lbs lighter than usual. Yokozuna stalls a lot as Hogan starts talking about Hogan being a coward as only he can. Hogan shoves him back a foot or two and Yokozuna shoves him into the corner with ease.

Some martial arts chops have Hogan in early trouble as we hear about a methodical pace. I'd rather do that than have Yokozuna blow up three minutes into the match. A whip into the corner sets up Hogan grabbing the foot, as is his custom. Yokozuna misses a charge in the corner and Hogan starts hammering away. Savage says the fans would pop if Hogan slammed him. That's quite the rare term.

The slam doesn't work though and Savage is in shock. Instead he tries some All American right hands (trademark Jim Ross) but more slam attempts go just as badly as the first. Even more right hands have Yokozuna staggered but he puts Hogan down with a clothesline. The big fat splash misses though and both guys are in trouble. Hogan gets up and bounces off

Yokozuna before we hit the bearhug. After nearly two minutes in the hold, Hogan punches his way to freedom (like an AMERICAN) but he runs into an elbow to the jaw.

A BIG belly to belly suplex gets two (and an even bigger kickout) and it's Hulk Up time. Several right hands and three big boots finally put Yokozuna down. The legdrop connects and Yokozuna THROWS Hogan off of him, sending the fans from a frenzy to stunned silence faster than anything I've ever seen. In an ending that almost made me cry back in the day, a Japanese photographer (rumored to be Harvey Wippleman) gets up on the apron. His camera explodes in Hogan's face, setting up a shot to the throat and the Hulkbuster legdrop to give Yokozuna the title back, shocking the crowd all over again.

Rating: D. And that's it for Hulk Hogan in the WWF for nearly nine years. Other than a few house show matches in Europe that were barely ever mentioned, Hogan would be off to retirement for nearly a year until he went over to WCW. This was the first monster to destroy Hulkamania, meaning that whoever beat him would be the next big thing. In theory that should have been Luger (or Crush) but for some reason they didn't pull the trigger on him at Summerslam like common sense would have said. Pretty big moment here and a big way to crush Hogan before he left the company.

Yokozuna Banzai Drops him post match and fans are stunned. Hogan may have been a relic in 1993, but this is similar to the Streak being broken: you would never believe it happened until you saw it.

Hogan is helped out and the remaining Japanese photographers take a lot of pictures. One more thing: after all the managers Hogan beat up over the years, it's FUJI that takes him out?

Mr. Perfect promises to prove what perfect is all about in the future. Not exactly.

Intercontinental Champion Shawn Michaels and brand new (as in like a week ago) bodyguard Diesel (named for the first time here), who helped him win the title back from Marty Jannetty at a house show, say maybe lightning can strike twice, even though Michaels is a far bigger star than Hogan.

Steiner Brothers/Smoking Gunns vs. Money Inc./Headshrinkers

Total cool down match here and no one believes anything else. Money Inc. has the belts at this point. Scott Steiner and DiBiase get things going. How can Rikishi (Fatu here) be in the Hall of Fame but the Steiners aren't? DiBiase armdrags him down to start but Steiner is fine with going amateur.

A dropkick puts Ted down and a clothesline puts him on the floor. Rick throws him back in and another clothesline sends Ted right back to the floor for a nice spot. He finally stays inside for a tag to Fatu but Bart dropkicks the Samoan down, setting up an armbar. Fatu no sells a faceplant and superkicks Bart right in the face. Heenan has a blast when JR mentions Billy going to college on a rodeo scholarship. You can't give Heenan prime material like that.

The Headshrinkers double backdrop Bart for two but he gets the same off a sunset flip to IRS. A double clothesline allows for the hot tag to Billy as the crowd really doesn't care. DiBiase catches Billy with a hot shot though and slaps on the Million Dollar Dream, sending Heenan into a chorus of Happy Trails. Ted lets go of the hold for some reason and gets small packaged out of nowhere for the pin.

Rating: D+. What a random ending with the Steiners not doing anything in the second half of the match. It sounded like they had to run out of there because of time or something and it made for a sudden ending. It could have been a lot worse, but this match was just there to give the fans something to see as they came out of their comas.

Mr. Fuji says America is finished but doesn't like Okerlund bringing up anything about cameras.

Intercontinental Title: Crush vs. Shawn Michaels

Crush is challenging while on the role of a lifetime, which just kind of ended soon after this with Crush being knocked off TV for several months before returning as a heel. A big shoulder sends Shawn to the floor and we hit the headlock. With wrestling not working, Shawn just punches him in the jaw. Well that's another way of going about it.

The champ grabs an armbar but misses the superkick and gets dropkicked out to the floor. Back in and Crush throws him around again before gorilla pressing him over his head with more than a few reps. Savage: "HE CAN SLAM YOKOZUNA!" A tilt-a-whirl backbreaker plants Michaels again but Diesel pulls him away from the head vice. Crush shows that all faces have to be stupid (though snappily dressed in orange, yellow and purple) by going after Diesel, allowing Shawn to knee him from the apron.

In a really painful looking spot, Shawn rams him head first into the post five straight times. Back in and Shawn fires off right hands to the head before putting on a front facelock. Crush eventually just throws him off to break the hold with some incredible looking power. Shawn's top rope ax handle doesn't work and a backbreaker gets two. A big boot and legdrop (brother) get the same for Crush and he clotheslines Shawn to the floor. Cue the cigar smoking Doinks for a distraction, allowing Shawn to superkick him in the back of the head to retain.

Rating: C. I liked this match more than I should have but I was a Crush fan back in the day. He was similar to Ryback's push when he got to the top of the company: he was insanely strong, had a good look, and never actually won anything. Allegedly Vince was going back and forth on giving either Crush or Luger the Hogan push and went with Luger, which didn't go all that well. Crush getting that run would have been very interesting to see, but I'm not sure if it would have worked in the end.

Bigelow says he'll win.

King of the Ring: Bam Bam Bigelow vs. Bret Hart

One hour time limit. Bret has a band hand and is still selling the knee from the Perfect match. JR says they're out of satellite time in 25 minutes, which would put the show at 2:44 max. Bret tries to speed things up to start but has to counter a gorilla press attempt to put Bigelow on the mat. An armbar doesn't get Bret anywhere as Bigelow just throws him out to the floor for a big crash.

Back in and Bigelow sends him back first into the buckle. I was expecting the chest bump there. Given that it's Hart, that's likely setting up something for later. That's quickly proven correct as Bigelow goes for

the back with some headbutts and forearms. More hard Irish whips have Bret reeling and we hit the bearhug. That goes nowhere so Bigelow just drops him with a belly to back. Bret's selling is incredible here as he's making every single move look like a bullet to the back.

They head outside again with Bret sending him into the barricade a few times, only to have Bigelow shrug it off and slam him on the concrete. Cue Bigelow chick Luna Vachon with a chair to Bret's back, which is too much for Bret to survive. Bigelow throws him back inside for the top rope headbutt (clearly didn't connect) and.....that's it as another referee comes in to explain the chair shot.

The match continues and you can almost hear Bret kill the referee for making him continue. Heenan is livid but Savage correctly points out that it should have been a DQ so Bigelow should be grateful. Bigelow hammers on the back and puts on a bearhug to keep up the psychology. Bret finally pulls him down into a DDT but Bigelow shrugs it off. A running backsplash misses but he whips Bret hard into the corner and Hart just falls down. There are FAR too many empty seats opposite the camera for the main event.

Bret counters an over the shoulder backbreaker into a sleeper but opts to dropkick him to the floor instead. A plancha sets up a bunch of right hands to the face cause Savage to spell pride p-r-y-d-e. Back in and Bret gets two off a middle rope clothesline and the middle rope elbow gets the same. Bam Bam just kicks off the Sharpshooter and we hit another bearhug, so Bret just bites out of it. Not liking being treated like a bowl of macaroni, Bigelow plants him with a powerslam for two. With frustration setting in, Bigelow puts him on the top rope but gets victory rolled for the pin and the crown.

Rating: B. It's not a classic but this was a great performance from Hart as he went over forty five minutes tonight and didn't have a really bad match in the whole bunch. Bigelow was really just a dragon to be slain but he had enough power that it sent Bret into some of his better selling.

The interesting thing here though is how this ending came back later.

Think about it: the match is restarted, a guy gets his already weakened back worked on even more but gets caught by a sudden move for the pin. If that doesn't ring a bell, think back to Wrestlemania XII and the overtime in the Iron Man match. It's almost the exact same thing but with a victory roll instead of a superkick. Oddly enough, the ending to the regulation of that match is even more move for move to the end of their Survivor Series 1992 match. I wonder if that's a Bret thing or just a REALLY big coincidence.

Anyway, Bret is rushed over for the coronation but Jerry Lawler shows up, trade some insults, gets annoyed by a Burger King chant and BLASTS him in the back with a scepter (actually injuring Bret's back) and kicking off a feud that lasted over two years. Of note here: Bret looks really, REALLY stupid with a big golden crown on his head.

Overall Rating: C. This show is more memorable than good, but the question is which part is more memorable. Hogan losing is far more important historically, but Bret winning is the part people remember more than anything else. That being said, the show itself is just ok. Hart vs. Perfect is well worth checking out but the rest of the show is really nothing all that great. Check it out for historical purposes but that's about it. Other than the classic of course.

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