

Survivor Series Count-Up – 1997: This Sounds Familiar

Survivor Series 1997

Date: November 9, 1997

Location: Molson Centre, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Attendance: 20,593

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

We had to get here eventually. This is the show that changes everything in wrestling and officially launches the WWF into a new era. Aside from the big moment on the show, we also have a very injured Steve Austin challenging Owen Hart for the Intercontinental Title and the in ring debut for Kane (at least in that character). Let's get to it.

The opening video is about the Iron Man Match between Bret and Shawn at Wrestlemania XII, where Shawn won the title in overtime. Bret has since gone insane and claimed conspiracy after conspiracy against him, mainly led by Vince and Shawn. The main event tonight is Bret vs. Shawn II. By that I mean about Bret vs. Shawn VIII (It's not even their first world title match at Survivor Series) but you get the point.

There's a Karate Fighters (game at the time) blimp flying around. I'm sure people who paid good money for their seats are THRILLED that they get to look at a blimp instead of being able to see the ring.

Team New Age Outlaws vs. Team Headbangers

New Age Outlaws, Godwins

Headbangers, New Blackjacks

The Outlaws are of course Billy Gunn and the Road Dogg, the Headbangers (a hard to describe team that wore skirts and jumped into each other) are Mosh and Thrasher, and the Blackjacks are Barry Windham and Bradshaw. Windham (looking FAT here) starts with Phineas, the latter of which is immediately knocked to the floor with a shoulder block. This is when the

Outlaws are a new team of jobbers who would soon shock the world and win the Tag Team Titles from the Legion of Doom.

Off to Bradshaw, who looks skinny here by comparison to what he would become. Phineas gets a boot up in the corner as the evil ones take over. The Outlaws don't want to come in so it's off to Henry instead. Bradshaw gets two off a legsweep and puts on an abdominal stretch before falling back and rolling up Henry for the pin. Back to Windham to face Phineas, with Barry hitting a gutwrench suplex and a lariat for two. Phineas comes back with a clothesline of his own for the elimination and to tie it up at three.

Mosh comes in to take over on Phineas with a devastating armbar. It's off to Billy who beats down Mosh and receives homophobic chants in his general nature. Or maybe it's something in French. We get down to some basic wrestling and the fans go SILENT. Mosh tries a bulldog but Billy shoves him off and gets the pin for a quick elimination. It's Thrasher/Bradshaw vs. Phineas/Outlaws.

Thrasher (who actually had a big hand in training Big Show) comes in and works on the arm but Phineas takes him down in return. This has been really dull so far. Thrasher goes up and hits the Stage Dive (top rope seated senton) for the pin to make it 2-2. Off to Bradshaw vs. Road Dogg with the former pounding away. A gutwrench powerbomb puts Dogg down but a Billy distraction lets Dogg get a school boy to pin Bradshaw.

Thrasher pounds on Dogg but walks into a pumphandle slam. He counters into a cover on the Dogg but Billy comes off the top with a legdrop. Now when I say legdrop, I mean he literally is a foot away from Thrasher but gets the pin anyway. This looked so bad that even though I had seen it before, it still made my jaw drop. The Outlaws survive.

Rating: F-. The ending alone makes this a failure, but on top of that, the best worker in this match was Thrasher by far. Let that sink in for a minute. The Outlaws had only been the Outlaws for a month and a half or so at this point so no one cared about them, the Godwins are as interesting as corporate accounting, the Blackjacks are the Blackjacks, and the Headbangers are barely interesting at all. This was a horrible

match and an even worse choice for an opener.

Truth Commission vs. Disciples of Apocalypse

Jackyl, Interrogator, Sniper, Recon

Crush, 8-Ball, Skull, Chainz

The Truth Commission is based on a real South African thing, where there were a lot of crimes were committed during Apartheid and the government said "tell the truth that you committed/witnessed these crimes and say you're sorry." Amazingly enough it calmed a lot of people down and made the situation a lot better. That being said, I have NO idea why it's used as a wrestling gimmick. In short, they're a military themed group. That sums them up as simply as I can.

The Comission is led by Jackyl, who is more famous as Cyrus in ECW. Interrogator is a monster more famous as Kurrigan and the real star of the team. Sniper is a French Canadian wrestler who means nothing and Recon is Bull Buchanan. Crush is Crush, 8-Ball and Skull are big twins and Chainz is Brian Lee from ECW. This really doesn't scream interesting to me but this is during the Gang Warz period which didn't ever do anything for me.

Interrogator and Chainz start things off after a brawl with Chainz hammering away but having no visible effect. A sidewalk slam eliminates Chainz in about a minute. Off to Recon vs. 8-Ball with Recon hitting a World's Strongest Slam for no cover. Jackyl comes in for what might be the only match he ever wrestled in WWF. He's much better as a manager anyway.

Jackyl drops a top rope knee which is immediately no sold. He chops away a bit but walks into a sidewalk slam from 8-Ball for the pin to make it 3-3. Sniper jumps 8-Ball and hits some elbows for two as Jackyl is on commentary now. Off to Crush, the leader of the team, who stomps away on Sniper a bit. Recon comes back in to face Skull and a collision sends Skull to the floor. 8-Ball comes in illegally and clotheslines Recon down for the pin.

Sniper comes in to beat on Skull but gets caught in a double spinebuster

from the twins for two. Interrogator hits 8-Ball from the apron and Sniper hits a bulldog for the elimination, making it 2-2. If this match sounds like a total mess that is hard to follow, it's because that's being nice about what's going on.

Off to Crush for a figure four headscissors on Recon. Skull DDTs Sniper but walks into a sidewalk slam from Interrogator for the pin. It's Crush vs. Sniper/Interrogator and Crush immediately powerslams Sniper down for the pin. Interrogator is in the ring before the pin hits and ANOTHER sidewalk slam gives Interrogator the final pin and the victory.

Rating: F. In ten minutes, we had seven eliminations, four of which were by the SAME FREAKING MOVE. This was another match where just like the first, there was no one out there that could carry things to make the match work in any way. It makes Interrogator look good, but it barely accomplished that because of how bad the match was.

We're about thirty five minutes into the show and it may be the worst thirty five minutes to open a show that I've ever seen.

Some fans are split over the main event.

Austin answers some questions from America Online.

We recap Team Canada vs. Team USA. Steve Blackman is in the match for the Americans now after running into the ring to save Vader on Monday so tonight is his debut.

Vader says his team doesn't look the same but that's because they're Americans.

Team Canada (captained by an Englishman) says they'll win.

Team USA vs. Team Canada

Team USA: Vader, Steve Blackman, Marc Mero, Goldust

Team Canada: British Bulldog, Jim Neidhart, Doug Furnas, Phillip Lafon

Team America comes out to what would become Kurt Angle's music and naturally are booed out of the building. The Canadians come out to Bret's

music to make sure the idea is hammered home. Furnas is from Oklahoma and Neidhart is from Nevada, but Jim had dual citizenship so it's not as backwards.

Mero, wearing a hat, starts with Bulldog. Mero takes off the hat and Bulldog wipes himself with it, making him a hero in Canada. Bulldog knocks Mero to the floor and makes fun of Blackman's martial arts in a funny bit. Vader comes in sans tag and works on Smith's arm but jumps into a slam. Bulldog EASILY suplexes Vader and it's off to Lafon.

Back to Mero who hits a knee lift but gets his head kicked off by Lafon, followed by a clothesline for two. Off to Neidhart and then right back to Lafon. Blackman comes in and JR points out that Steve isn't a wrestler. Lafon DDTs him for two and gets a crucifix for the same. Blackman fights off Team Canada on his own but gets caught on the floor in a fight with Furnas and Lafon, resulting in a countout elimination.

It's Mero vs. Neidhart now with Jim missing a middle rope splash. Vader comes in and Neidhart knocks him down twice in a row. Vader comes back with the running body attack and a splash for the pin. Back to Lafon for some kicks to send Vader to the floor. Vader gets back in and Lafon is sent rolling to the corner, followed by a big belly to belly to put him down. A middle rope splash is enough to eliminate Lafon, leaving Bulldog and Furnas vs. Vader, Mero and Goldust.

Furnas comes in to pound away but misses a dropkick, allowing the tag in to Mero. Has Goldust been in there yet? Mero pounds Furnas down and goes up for a moonsault press and it looks AWFUL, with Furnas going down like he was trying to powerslam Mero out of the air but Mero hitting the move like usual. Either way it gets two and it's off to Bulldog because Furnas doesn't seem to be sure what planet he's on.

Mero escapes the Bulldog powerslam and blasts Smith with a right hand. Back to Furnas who fires off the rights and lefts. Furnas does the exact same thing, but Mero is a legitimate former amateur boxing champion so that's not really a fair contest. Mero tries a rollup but gets reversed into one by Furnas who grabs a handful of tights to get us down to 2-2.

Vader pounds on Furnas as the King laments Sable having to leave with

Mero. Furnas clotheslines Vader down and it's off to Bulldog again. Goldust, who apparently has a broken hand (thanks for letting us know earlier), STILL doesn't want to come in. Vader suplexes Furnas down but Furnas hits him low. When Vader gets another break from Bulldog, Goldust hides on the floor instead of tagging.

Furnas suplexes Vader down but doesn't tag. A Frankensteiner takes Vader down for two but Vader is right back up. Vader slugs Goldust in the face and pulls him into the ring. Goldust walks out for a countout but Vader slams Furnas down and hits the Vader Bomb for the elimination. Vader turns around and is knocked silly with the ring bell from Bulldog for the final elimination.

Rating: C-. This was a better match by miles and miles than the first two, mainly due to people with actual talent being in there. On top of that, the people CARED about the match and it makes the match a lot better by result. The result was never in doubt given how worthless Team America was, but it was cool to see Vader getting to be his old self, even for one night. The match still wasn't great but after the first two matches tonight, this was a masterpiece by comparison.

Buy Austin's shirt!

We recap Kane vs. Mankind, by talking about Undertaker. The idea here is that Undertaker kept saying Kane wasn't alive, but Bearer insisted he was. Kane showed up at Badd Blood and cost Undertaker the first Cell match. Kane destroyed various people, including Dude Love. Dude left but was replaced by Mankind, who offered to stand up to the monster and tonight it's Kane's debut match. Mankind's solution to Kane: hit him in the head with a pipe. I love it when things get basic like that.

Mankind promises to charge against a brick wall as many times as it takes until it goes down, and if he dies launching himself into that brick wall, so be it. If that's what it takes to get to Paul Bearer, so be it.

Kane vs. Mankind

The brawl starts immediately on the floor with Kane throwing Mankind into the steps. Kane has the red arena lights ala Sin Cara during his matches

at this point. With Mankind half dead in the ring, Kane does the corner fire deal and the match starts. Mankind fights up and a Cactus Clothesline puts both of them on the floor. Kane knocks him right back down and throws the steps at Mankind's head to take him down again. Total brawl so far, as it should be. Back in and Mankind charges into a big boot but Kane chokes away in the corner.

Kane sends it to the floor again and beats on him some more, but Mankind hot shots him onto the steps to slow the monster down. A chair to the head knocks Kane back into the ring and there's a piledriver, but Mankind goes after Bearer by mistake. Kane sits up and chokeshoves Mankind off the apron and through the announce table. The Spanish table of course.

Kane loads up a chokeslam on the floor but Mankind kicks him low (which only works on Kane on occasion) and DDTs him on the concrete. The elbow off the apron hits Kane again but Kane sits up and slams Mankind off the top to the floor. Back in and Mankind literally pulls himself up to his feet and is immediately tombstoned for the pin.

Rating: C+. When you have a new guy you want to put over, you call Mick Foley. This is a match you have to think about to get why it worked. First and foremost, Kane is supposed to be a monster who has very little experience in the ring. Think of him like Jason from Friday the 13th who just wants carnage instead of wanting to wrestle. These two beat the tar out of each other and it made Kane look unstoppable. That would continue for about five and a half months until the Dead Man came back.

Vince says the main event will happen tonight.

Team Legion of Doom vs. Nation of Domination

Legion of Doom, Ken Shamrock, Ahmed Johnson

Faarooq, The Rock, Kama Mustafa, D'Lo Brown

The Nation of Domination is a black power stable led by Faarooq, a brawler. Rock is of course Rocky Maivia, Mustafa is a fighting machine later to be known as the Godfather, and Brown is the closest thing to a high flier the team has. The LOD, Tag Team Champions here, and company

talk about being ready for war. Shamrock is a former UFC Champion trying his hand at wrestling. Brown and Hawk start with D'Lo bouncing off of him. Hawk no sells a piledriver as is his custom and a neckbreaker puts Brown down. Off to Rocky who gets knocked around but someone hits Hawk in the back and the yet to be named Rock Bottom eliminates him.

Ahmed comes in and "hits" a jumping back elbow to take Rock down. Kama, quite the monster in his own right, is in next and takes Johnson down with one shot. Faarooq is in next to work on Ahmed's ribs and continue a feud that went on for like a year. Brown whips Ahmed with a belt which the referee somehow doesn't hear. Faarooq loads up the Dominator but Johnson escapes (while falling down) and hits a Pearl River Plunge for the elimination.

Brown comes in again and hits a quick Low Down (frog splash) for no cover. Johnson starts no selling and hits a sitout gordbuster. Faarooq is still at ringside. Rock comes in but walks into a spinebuster. Ahmed hits the ropes but Faarooq trips him up and holds the foot so Rocky can get the pin. It's Animal/Shamrock vs. Brown/Rocky/Kama at the moment. Animal comes in to face Rocky but it's quickly off to Shamrock. Ken is still somewhat new here so his style still looks fresh.

A big dropkick puts Rocky down and it's off to Kama. After getting beaten around for a bit, Kama puts on a front facelock to slow things down. A double clothesline puts both guys down and some LOUD noise freaks everyone out. Even JR and King don't know what it was. Animal gets two off a legdrop but gets kicked in the face for his efforts. Kama showboats a bit too much though and Animal dropkicks him in the back and grabs a rollup for the pin.

Brown comes in and during the distraction, Rocky hits Shamrock low for two. D'Lo hooks a chinlock followed by a backbreaker, but his moonsault misses by about two feet. The Outlaws come out while wearing the stolen LOD shoulder pads, and we've got powder and a shoved referee. Animal gets counted out during this mess, leaving us with Brown/Rock vs. Shamrock.

JR talks about how many people Shamrock has made tap out. Jerry: "This is wrestling. You don't win by making people tap out." JR: ".....YEAH YOU DO!"

Brown starts but it's both Nation members in there at once. Shamrock runs them both over, suplexes Brown and gets the submission via ankle lock. Rock cracks Ken in the back with a chair shot but it only gets two. Rock hits his spinning DDT for two as does the People's Elbow (not a thing yet). Ken comes back with a northern lights suplex and a standing hurricanrana. There's the ankle lock and Rocky is done.

Rating: C. This was a little messy but it pushed Shamrock hard while the heat for Rocky was INSANE. The crowd hated him and Vince certainly took notice. Both of these guys would get huge pushes in the next year with Rock's being a major step up. The LOD were in their very last run here and they didn't go out well after that. Fun match here although not great from a technical standpoint at all.

We recap Austin vs. Owen. Austin was challenging for the Intercontinental Title at Summerslam when Owen piledrove him, legitimately hurting his neck (and in the long run saving the company because of what Austin had to evolve into) and paralyzing Austin for a few minutes. Austin amazingly enough finished the match and won the title (with the worst rollup of all time), which is remarkable when you think about it. He had to forfeit the title a month later due to the injury but tonight he's going for it again.

Intercontinental Title: Steve Austin vs. Owen Hart

Owen is defending, having won the title in a tournament since Austin was hurt. Owen has Lafon, Furnas and Bulldog with him. Hart stalls forever on the floor while rocking an Owen 3:16 (I Just Broke Your Neck) shirt. Neidhart tries to sneak in on Austin but walks into a Stunner. The champion gets in a shot to start and tries a piledriver, much to the crowd's delight. Owen wraps the knee around the post but gets kicked in the face.

The Hart Foundation leaves and Austin clotheslines Owen in the back on the floor. Hart puts Owen onto the broken Spanish Announce Table before choking away with a cord. Hart wants to be DQ'ed and rings the bell early. Keep that in mind for later. Back in and Austin stomps Owen in the corner, hits the Stunner and wins the title. It's as quick as it sounds.

Rating: D+. This was barely four minutes long. I'd assume they were unsure about how long Austin could go out there and if that's the case it's more than understandable. Austin would again forfeit the title a month later because he wanted to go after the World Title, which he would of course win at Wrestlemania.

Attitude. It's here.

We recap Bret vs. Shawn. This is Bret's chance to get his win back from Shawn at Wrestlemania 12. Bret was bitter at Shawn after a massive heel turn, so there's some great hatred going on here. Ironically enough Shawn cost Undertaker the title, giving it to Bret, at Summerslam.

WWF World Title: Bret Hart vs. Shawn Michaels

Shawn is European Champion coming into this for no particular reason other than he wanted Bulldog to not have the title anymore. Shawn wipes himself with the Canadian flag (something else taken from Bulldog) during his entrance to further make himself public enemy #1. We get the long tracking shot for Bret's entrance which is always cool to see. Shawn jumps Bret to start but Bret snaps on him and beats Shawn right back down to the delight of the crowd.

A HARD clothesline puts Shawn on the floor and Bret is going off. I don't think the bell rang yet. Bret takes it to the crowd and Shawn is reeling. Vince, Commissioner Slaughter and a half dozen referees are at ringside now. JR talks about how this could be Bret's last match if he loses. Shawn gets an American flag bandana and chokes him into the crowd. Remember the match hasn't started yet. Bret backdrops Shawn over the barricade and back to ringside.

Shawn keeps trying to piledrive Bret on the concrete but Hart keeps escaping. They head back into the crowd with Bret in total control. They go to the entrance and Bret decks a referee. Back into the ring they go and the bell FINALLY rings as Bret chokes Shawn with a Fleur de Lis. Shawn comes back with the forearm and nipup as the fans question Shawn's sexual orientation.

Michaels chokes with the flag as Bret has a busted hand. Shawn stalls a

lot because that's the kind of guy he is. Back to the floor with Shawn pounding on Bret and spitting on the crowd. Shawn drops Bret face first on the steps and breaks a Canadian flag over his knee. Back in and Shawn hits a top rope ax handle and it's off to a front facelock. Bret escapes in what has to be the loudest reaction to a broken front facelock of all time.

Shawn comes back and slams Bret down but Bret rolls through a cross body off the top for two. Bret puts on the Hartbreaker, the figure four around the post for a bit before going after the knee in almost perfect Ric Flair fashion, down to the cannonballs down to the knee and a Figure Four.

Shawn finally turns it over and Bret gets a rope. A Russian legsweep gets two for Bret as does a snap suplex. Bret goes up but Shawn pulls the referee into the way so the shot hits Hebner instead. Shawn rakes Bret's eyes, puts Bret in the Sharpshooter, and Hebner calls for the bell to give Shawn the title in the most infamous moment ever in wrestling.

Rating: B-. I'm only talking about the match here. The main thing to keep in mind about the famous ending is that there was about twenty minutes of brawling and of the actual match before the finish. I think that's something people forget because of the famous part. The match we got was quite good, which isn't really surprising given how familiar these two were with each other. It's no masterpiece, but it felt like an epic encounter, which is what it needed to do.

Now we'll get to the big white elephant in Montreal. I've not going to pretend like I have some big insight into what happened because I certainly don't. Long books have been written about what happened here and there's no point in rehashing the whole thing all over again. In short, it was Bret's last match, he didn't want to lose the title in Canada, a screwy finish was agreed on, Vince changed the ending and screwed over Bret, Bret wasn't seen in WWE for almost thirteen years.

After all the years since then, I think both parties were wrong, but Bret needed to get over himself. So what if he had to lose the title in Canada? I get that he couldn't stand Shawn, but for someone who seems to

pride himself on being oh so professional, it's pretty lame to say he doesn't want to lose the title in another country when he made it clear he was leaving.

Vince was in major trouble at this point and was under a lot of pressure. While I don't think he believed Bret would trash the title on Raw, he had to be worried about something happening, like the title having no value if Bret never lost it, which is understandable. Did he go about the issue the right way? No, but it wasn't a normal circumstance. Vince did what he thought was best and while it caused a ton of controversy, it was one of the few things he could do. There are a to of different ways you can look at it, and there isn't a single right answer.

Overall Rating: D. Main event aside, this was a pretty bad show overall. The first forty minutes are AWFUL, the next match is just ok, Kane vs. Mankind is decent, the next match is about building for the future, the match after that was basically a squash, and the main event was good but not great. When the best you can do is good but not great, you've got a problem. They're pretty lucky that only the main event is remembered here, because the rest of the show sucked.

Ratings Comparison

Team New Age Outlaws vs. Team Headbangers

Original: D+

Redo: F-

Truth Commission vs. Disciples of Apocalypse

Original: F

Redo: F

Team Canada vs. Team USA

Original: B+

Redo: C-

Kane vs. Mankind

Original: C+

Redo: C+

Team Legion of Doom vs. Nation of Domination

Original: B

Redo: C

Steve Austin vs. Owen Hart

Original: C

Redo: D+

Shawn Michaels vs. Bret Hart

Original: B+

Redo: B-

Overall Rating

Original: B+

Redo: D+

Now there's a major change, likely the biggest so far.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/11/06/history-of-survivor-series-count-up-1997-what-a-screwy-show/>

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