

Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XIII: The Match That Saved The Company

Wrestlemania XIII

Date: March 23, 1997

Location: Rosemont Horizon, Chicago, Illinois

Attendance: 18,197

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

There's a very strong case that this is the night where the Attitude Era began. I'm not sure if that's the case but it beats almost anything else for second place. The alleged main event here is Sid defending the world title against Undertaker but in reality it's Austin vs. Hart in a battle of the generations in a submission match. The match is a dark horse candidate for the greatest match of all time. Let's get to it.

The opening video talks about the tradition of Wrestlemania but mentions that there's a new force in the company. It's not a person but rather an attitude of vengeance and a lack of respect.

Godwinns vs. Doug Furnas/Phillip LaFon vs. Headbangers vs. New Blackjacks

This is under elimination rules and the winner gets a tag title shot tomorrow on Raw. Why not have the title match here and the #1 contenders match earlier is beyond me but the WWF is running scared of WCW at this point so common sense is thrown out the window. The Blackjacks are Barry Windham and Bradshaw. We get some clips of the originals for the sake of old school. The new ones say they're back and they'll beat up all the small people.

Naturally it's a big brawl to start with all eight guys fighting at once. We finally get down to Henry vs. Bradshaw which is a match that has haunted many of my nightmares over the years. A big clothesline puts Bradshaw down and it's quickly off to Thrasher. Bradshaw still has his vest on. He runs over Thrasher though and there goes the vest. In an

interesting bit of strategy, Bradshaw tags in Phineas and then punches him in the face.

Phineas pounds on him a bit more but brings in Mosh to face Thrasher. Jerry makes fun of Vince's knowledge of rock music, saying Vince's favorite rock band is Mount Rushmore. After some slam dancing for lack of a better term, it's off to LaFaon who gets caught in a double flapjack for two. That doesn't last long as it's off to Furnas vs. Windham with the former hitting a quick rana for two. Windham hits a kind of powerbomb to take over but Bradshaw comes in and helps his partner beat down LaFon.

With the help of his partner, Bradshaw suplexes Phil out to the floor. The four members of the two teams head to the floor where Bradshaw shoves the referee and LaFon and Furnas are counted out, giving us two eliminations. So we've got the Headbangers vs. the Godwinns now and Thrasher gets to be in trouble first. It's pretty clear that Vince has no idea which of the Headbangers is which.

Thrasher starts to fight back so he and Phineas spit on each other. Vince implies that Phineas is into bestiality which is an image I really didn't need. Off to Mosh vs. Henry but a clothesline by the Godwinn puts both guys out on the floor. Mosh gets back in as Henry is only on the apron, allowing the Headbanger to hit a springboard clothesline to take Henry back down. Lawler keeps up the rock music jokes by saying Vince thinks Fleetwood Mac is a new burger at McDonald's.

Thrasher misses a moonsault and it's off to Mosh vs. Phineas again. Phineas loads up the Slop Drop (reverse DDT) on Thrasher but Mosh makes the save. Everything breaks down and a top rope seated senton by Mosh is enough for the pin on Phineas to send the Headbangers to Raw.

Rating: C-. This shows you where the tag division was at this point. There were indeed several teams fighting over the titles but that doesn't always make for an interesting series of matches in the division. The Headbangers were different but not a great team at all and the Godwinns were WAY past their expiration date at this point. Not much to see here but it was fast paced.

In Your House ad.

CALL THE HOTLINE!!!

Honky Tonk Man is here, still looking for his new protege. He'll be doing commentary for the next match.

Intercontinental Title: Rocky Maivia vs. The Sultan

Maivia is defending. Sultan is more famous as Rikishi and has Bob Backlund and Iron Sheik in his corner. Lawler tells Honky not to pick Rocky for his protege because there's no future there. So much for the Memphis school system. Rocky starts off fast and knocks Sultan out to the floor. The managers try to calm the big man down but Rocky goes after him, only to wind up clotheslining the post.

Back in and Sultan runs him over with a clothesline of his own. He throws Rocky into the corner by the throat and hits another clothesline for two. Off to a nerve hold as Honky rants about how he already would have defended the title and been in the back combing his hair. Sultan goes up and hits a top rope headbutt for no cover. So we have a Samoan portraying an Arabian but hitting a headbutt to another Samoan. I'm so racially confused.

Rocky tries a sunset flip but Sultan grabs him by the throat to block. A belly to belly gets two and we hit the chinlock. The fans are very restless with this and rightly think it's boring. Rocky fights up but they clothesline each other to stop things from getting interesting. Sultan starts pounding away again but Rocky starts feeling the soul and makes his comeback.

Maivia snaps off some punches to Sultan and gets two off a belly to belly suplex. The spinning DDT that Rocky doesn't use anymore puts Sultan down and there's his top rope cross body (finisher at the time) but the Sheik has the referee. Sultan gets up and hits a superkick for a very close two. A piledriver gets another two count for Sultan but Rocky grabs a rollup out of nowhere for the retaining pin.

Rating: D+. This got better by the end but man alive was it dull for the most part. It just kept going and Sultan didn't have enough enough to make a match like this work. Rocky would get WAY better and the jump he's

made since Survivor Series to this point is remarkable. The fans would start to hate him though, which wound up being exactly what he needed all along.

Post match Rocky is doing an interview with JR when Sultan jumps him from behind. Sheik, Sultan and Backlund all beat on Maivia until Rocky Johnson, Rocky's dad, comes in to help fight them off. Cool moment but I don't think most people knew who Johnson was.

Ken Shamrock, the guest referee in the submission match, says that he'll call it down the middle. He's here because he's a submission master, which he actually was as a former UFC World Champion.

Doc Hendrix (with a LOUD echo on his mic) is with HHH and Chyna. HHH doesn't think his relationship with Chyna is any of Doc's business.

Hunter Hearst Helmsley vs. Goldust

This feud just kept GOING for months on end. Goldust crouches down and does his mind game schtick before pounding away on HHH. This is a very personal rivalry apparently. What the rivalry is about isn't important enough to explain. Goldie pounds away in the corner and hits a fast atomic drop before sending HHH to the floor. HHH is on the apron so Goldust can slide under the ropes and hit his uppercut.

Now the not yet Game is tied up in the ropes with his feet dangling over the floor. After he's freed, Goldust clotheslines him back inside but gets caught in the facebuster to slow things down. That doesn't last long though as Goldust powerslams HHH down and goes up top. HHH comes back though and crotches the gold one before sending him off the top and face first into the apron.

Back in and HHH is in control, ripping open Goldust's clothes to chop at the bare chest. A hard whip into the other corner puts Goldust down again and there's a swinging neckbreaker for two. Off to an abdominal stretch by HHH which goes off to an arm trap chinlock. Helmsley grabs a few covers but can't keep Goldust down for three. Goldie comes back with a near low blow and an uppercut to the face.

Not that any of that matters though as HHH comes right back with a suplex and knee drop for two. Goldust is like MOVIE REFERENCES and chops away in the corner but HHH knocks him right back down. A small package gets two for Goldust but HHH takes over again almost immediately. Goldie comes back with a cross body for two but they hit head to head to put both guys down. HHH goes up top but jumps into a flying...shall we say hip attack from Goldust to put him back down.

Chyna keeps staring at the ring without moving much more than her eyes. HHH misses a charge into the corner and gets put down by a backdrop. Goldust's bulldog gets two as Chyna starts walking around the ring. HHH escapes the Curtain Call (reverse suplex) but Goldust counters the counter into a slingshot. He loads up the Curtain Call again but sees Chyna near Marlena. Marlena jumps up on the apron but Goldust is knocked into her, sending Marlena into Chyna's arms. The Pedigree ends Goldie quickly.

Rating: C-. This was higher quality but it was still dull stuff. This was a REALLY bad period for HHH as he wasn't having interesting matches and wasn't in DX yet to let him be funny either. That combines to make him like a 12 year old hitting on girls: awkward, not interesting, and more laughable than effective. Nothing to see here, as usual with these two.

Shawn Michaels tries to figure out AOL.

Tag Titles: Owen Hart/British Bulldog vs. Mankind/Vader

Owen/Bulldog are defending and have to deal with Paul Bearer managing the challengers. JR tries to cause trouble among the tag champions by asking Bulldog if he's mad over Owen saying he's smarter than Bulldog. Bulldog is also European Champion here, having beaten Owen for it a few weeks ago in a masterpiece. Owen and Vader start things off with the Canadian getting pounded down into the corner by the monster.

Hart tries to speed things up and actually takes Vader down with a spinwheel kick. A cross body is easily caught though and a rana is countered into a powerbomb. The idea here is that Vader and Mankind could have problems with Bulldog but they can beat up Owen with relative ease. Vader loads up the Bomb which draws in Bulldog and Mankind. Bulldog

clotheslines the monsters down and Owen dropkicks them both down to one up his partner.

It's Bulldog vs. Mankind now with the Brit stomping away in the corner. There's the delayed vertical but Vader won't even let Bulldog cover. Bulldog casually slams/suplexes Vader down to show off a little bit. It's back to Mankind vs. Bulldog with Mankind being put in a chinlock. Mankind fights up and throws him to the floor where Bearer hands him the Urn. Bulldog trips him down though to avoid the shot, only to have Vader get the Urn and blast Bulldog in the back of the head to shift control.

Back in and Vader hits a suplex on Bulldog for two before pounding away in the corner. A corner splash crushes the British one and a middle rope splash (regular, not Vader Bomb style) only gets two. That's a surprise and it earns a Bulldog chant. Mankind comes in but can't get the Mandible Claw on. Instead he pounds Bulldog down into the corner and hits a running knee to the head. Instead of covering, Mankind goes to the floor and screams a bit. You know, because that's what he does.

Vader runs Bulldog over again but as he goes up, Bulldog flips him over in a kind of release slam. Back to Owen who comes in with a missile dropkick to take Vader back down. A top rope cross body gets two but Vader CRUSHES him with a standing body block. The challengers hit a kind of Demolition Decapitator off the apron to the floor. That move put Rick Martel out for about seven months in 1988 but here it keeps Owen down for about six seconds. Now THAT is toughness.

Stu and Helen are in the front row as Mankind chokes away at Owen. Back in and Owen grabs a DDT out of desperation but a splash hits knees to slow him down again. Mankind charges at Owen but they hit heads to put both guys down. We actually hear about The Wrestling Classic for no apparent reason. Vader comes back in to box Owen's ears but Hart escapes a suplex and hits a quick spin kick for two. Out to the floor again where Owen hits a quick belly to belly on Mankind before they head back inside.

The enziguri puts Mankind down and there's the hot tag to Bulldog. Vader loses his mask as Bulldog beats on both challengers. Mankind is still legal and gets whipped HARD into the corner. There's the powerslam but

Mankind grabs the Claw to escape. Everything breaks down and Mankind and Bulldog go to the floor. Mankind puts on the Claw and it's a double countdown.

Rating: B-. That might be overrating it but after an hour of boring stuff, this was a nice breath of air. The story here was shaky but it worked well enough all things considered. I'm not sure why this match happened as I don't remember any build up to it at all and with a #1 contenders match earlier in the night, I really don't get why this match happened. Still though, not bad stuff.

Mankind refuses to let go of the hold.

We recap Bret vs. Austin which is the real main event of this show. So Bret was all awesome and such but after losing the title at Wrestlemania last year, Bret took six months off to whine. Then he came back and felt that he kept getting screwed over by everyone from Shawn to Austin to Vince (nah that could never happen). Austin was leading the charge of disrespect by saying Bret was just a crybaby anymore. This led to a masterpiece between Austin and Bret that made everyone realize Austin was for real and the next big thing.

Hart barely won but he kept snapping and even hit Pat Patterson, the symbol of respect and tradition. This led to the Royal Rumble where Bret had the match won and eliminated Austin, only to have Austin sneak back in and win the match. A month later Bret won the vacant world title, only to have Austin cost him the belt the next night on Raw. This all led up to here and a submission match with the theme of a submission master vs. a guy that will not quit.

Steve Austin vs. Bret Hart

This is a submission match and Ken Shamrock is guest referee. Austin has actual glass shatter as he enters which is rather cool. He gets cheered but Bret gets something resembling a mixed reaction. Austin tackles him down to start and the fight is on immediately. They head to the floor with neither guy being able to get an advantage. Austin gets posted but he manages to crotch Bret on the barricade. Bret gets clotheslined into the crowd as this is all action so far.

Bret gets in a few shots in the audience and Shamrock is right with them. Presumably this is falls count anywhere. Bret gets in a solid right hand but Austin grabs him for a piledriver. Hart counters with a backdrop and they head back towards the ring. Back to ringside and Bret dives off the barricade with a forearm to the back. Austin comes right back by whipping Hart into the steps to put him down again.

Steve hits a forearm off the apron before picking up the steps. Bret kicks him in the ribs though and the steps might have crushed Austin's leg. As they get back in the ring (remember that thing?) Bret guillotines Austin on the top rope to take over again. Bret cranks on the leg and cannonballs down on it ala Flair. More cranking ensues and Hart wants him to get up. Bret misses another cannonball and Austin ERUPTS with a clothesline to put both guys down.

We get some foreshadowing by Lawler when he says you can't give up when you're unconscious. Hart comes back with a kick to the leg and throws on the Figure Four around the post. Bret goes to get the bell but switches over to a chair. That one has too much padding on it though so he gets a regular chair to Pillmanize the ankle with. The fans are getting WAY into this. Bret goes up top but Austin crotches him and CRACKS him with the chair.

Another big chair shot to the back sets up a suplex as Hart is in big trouble all of a sudden. A middle rope elbow from Austin hits Bret as JR is in full on JR mode, including a few jabs at WCW ("This isn't about posing or covering a bald spot!"). Austin this another Bret move in the Russian legsweep followed by a reverse Koji Clutch (as in he cranks on the arm while wrapping his leg around Bret's head. That's a bit too complicated for Austin though so there's a Boston Crab instead.

Bret makes a rope because in a war like this, let's make sure we follow the rules. Austin loads up a Sharpshooter (he has no idea how to get it on) but Austin escapes. Steve fires him through the ropes and to the floor. Bret comes back and reverses a whip into the barricade while running over a few people in the process. Austin is bleeding and it's a GUSHER. Bret sends him into the steps and pounds away at the cut as we head back inside.

Hart pounds away even harder at Austin's forehead before hitting the Five Moves of Doom. Bret gets the chair as Vince says this is becoming too much to watch. Hart drives the chair into the leg over and over again but he can't get the Sharpshooter again. The mat is covered in blood. Austin comes back with a low blow but he can barely stand up. He whips Bret chest first into the corner and here comes the Rattlesnake. Austin stomps the mudhole in Bret and the double bird gets a big reaction from the fans.

Austin puts Bret on top and superplexes him back down. You can't see Austin's forehead from all the blood. Since nothing else works, Austin goes to the floor and gets the electrical cable to choke Bret out. Hart grabs the bell from somewhere though and blasts Austin in the head, knocking him silly. Now the Sharpshooter goes on and the place goes NUTS. Austin's head is on the mat and you can see the blood pooling up under him. That is SICK.

The crowd starts chanting for Austin and we get one of the most famous shot in company history as Austin screams into the camera with blood flowing down his face. He gets one last rush of adrenaline to push up and break the Sharpshooter for the first time ever. Well kind of as he gets Bret off his back but couldn't break the grip. Bret gets the hold back on but Austin will not quit. Austin is out cold and Shamrock finally stops it. Austin never gave up.

Rating: A+. This is the highest rating a match can get. If there was a higher rating, this match would get that. This is one of the greatest wars you will ever see in a ring with some of the greatest storytelling you'll ever see either. The idea of Bret being taken out of his element, only to get sucked into Austin's world where he reaches a point that he's never been to before but it's STILL not enough to stop Austin is amazing and works to this day. The key point here: Hart could not stop Austin. He could only slow him down. Absolutely amazing and if you haven't seen this, go find it right now. Seriously, go watch it now. It's excellent.

Post match Bret is disgusted with himself but looks at Austin's lifeless body and gets mad all over again for not being able to make Austin quit. Bret goes after the leg again but Shamrock grabs him and hooks a kind of

suplex to get Hart off. Shamrock says let's go if you want to but Bret backs down and leaves. The fans GO OFF on Bret as Austin is trying to remember what planet he's on. A referee comes out to check on him and gets a Stunner for his troubles. Austin walks out on his own power and gets a well deserved standing ovation. And that my friends, is a double turn.

Amazingly enough, Bret vs. Austin was only just beginning. The next five months would be even more insane with perhaps an even better match blowing it off. Now let THAT sink in for a minute. This is still one of the few matches that has an actual impact on me and I get WAY into it every time I see it.

Why aren't you watching this match right now? I'm tempted to watch it again.

Faarooq and the Nation say the criminals are out tonight in Chicago and they're ready for the LOD and Ahmed in the Chicago street fight.

Nation of Domination vs. Legion of Doom/Ahmed Johnson

It's Crush/Faarooq/Savio Vega plus a bunch of unnamed lackeys forming the Nation at this point. They bring out every weapon you could think of for this match between about the nine people they have here. Ahmed has the spikes on too and they bring the kitchen sink with them. Ok point for a funny idea. It's a big brawl to start (and will continue to be that way) with the good guys beating up the lackeys.

Faarooq hits Animal in the back with a nightstick and Ahmed hits a big dive over the barricade to take out I think Savio. I'm not going to be able to call everything here so expect a lot to be missed. Ahmed crushes Crush with a trashcan as Hawk has a 2x4 to stalk Savio with. Animal tries a piledriver on Faarooq through a table but they just fall off to the side instead. The fans chant for the LOD and Animal blasts Faarooq with a fire extinguisher. Savio cleans house with a trashcan but gets it wrapped around him and blasted by Hawk.

Ahmed slams Faarooq through the table from earlier and there goes the fire extinguisher again. Now we get a big rope with a noose on it to hang

Ahmed. The Nation is too big and powerful for LOD and Ahmed to fight off. Hawk comes back with a double clothesline to Jerry's shock. It was an actual wrestling move! Ahmed gets out of the noose and beats up D-Lo Brown for a bit. Animal hits Faarooq with a parking sign as Savio throws Ahmed over the barricade.

Crush finds a wrench from somewhere to blast Animal with as Faarooq is pulled to the floor by the rope. They're clearly starting to get tired now. Hawk sprays the Nation down with the extinguisher again but the lackeys save Faarooq from the Pearl River Plunge. Crush gets caught in the Doomsday Device out of nowhere before getting hit by a 2x4 for the pin.

Rating: B-. You know what, why not. This was a FIGHT and it worked quite well. They didn't try to make this anything but a street fight and that's what they gave us. This wasn't good or quality or anything but it was certainly fun and exactly what it was advertised as. Good stuff here and the second best match of the night so far.

Post match D'Lo (not yet named) takes the Pearl River Plunge and the small white guys (PG-13) take a double Doomsday Device to pop the crowd HUGE.

Here's Shawn Michaels to do commentary on the main event. This was when he had a "knee injury", which had a bad case of I don't want to return the job to Bret so I'll say I'm hurt and not lose to him like a man would - it is.

WWF World Title: Sycho Sid vs. Undertaker

This is because Sid won the title and Undertaker is getting a title shot for....no reason that I can remember at all actually. He was just kind of thrown in there to get the title off Sid with no real explanation. Sid gives his usual insane promo about how he's going to retain the title because he's not scared. For the first time ever, we hear that Undertaker has never lost at Wrestlemania. Sid's pyro of his name in lights is awesome.

Just after the bell, here's Bret Hart. Shawn: "Imagine that: Bret being

resentful." Bret yells at Shawn for having a fake injury and losing his smile. He then says that he and Undertaker are no longer friends. As for Sid, he's a fraud because the belt belongs to Bret. Thankfully Sid hits Bret in the face and powerbombs him (Shawn: "And now you're getting beaten up because of your big mouth."). Taker jumps Sid from behind and we get another bell to officially start the match.

Sid throws him into the corner to start but charges into a big boot. Taker hits a kind of splash in the corner followed by a slam for two. Old School hits Sid but Taker charges into a bearhug. The bearhug stays on for a long time as you would expect it to. These two have 22 minutes for this match and that's a recipe for disaster. Sid finally kicks Undertaker to the floor and then over the French announce table for good measure.

Apparently this is no holds barred according to Gorilla. Sid drops him on the table and almost breaks it in the process. Back in and Sid pounds away at the back even more before hooking a camel clutch. Jerry: "How do you kill a dead man?" Vince: "You don't have to. You just have to pin him for three seconds." Point to Vince I guess. Sid hits a powerslam but can only get three two's in a row.

A big leg gets two for Sid but Taker comes back with the flying clothesline for two. They head to the floor where Sid is thrown over the barricade. That goes nowhere so we head back inside for a horrible chinlock by the champion. Taker fights up and hits a powerslam for two before putting on a nerve hold of his own. A clothesline puts Sid back down for two as Taker is looking tired.

They hit big boots at the same time to put each other down. Sid goes to the middle rope for an ax handle and thankfully keeps his leg intact. A kind of middle rope clothesline/punch to the face gets two for the champion but here comes the Dead Man. Sid slams him down and goes up top, only to be crotched and slammed down. Undertaker hits a top rope clothesline for two more as the match FINALLY picks up a bit. Taker loads up the Tombstone but gets reversed into a tombstone by Sid for two.

We head back to the floor again but here's Bret Hart to smack Sid in the back with a chair. Referees and officials come out to throw Bret out as

Sid is rammed back first into the post. Back inside we go again and it's a chokeslam for a VERY close two. They botch what might have been the flying clothesline as Sid ducks down, sending Taker flying. Here comes the powerbomb but Bret interferes AGAIN. The distraction lets Taker hit the Tombstone for the pin and the title.

Rating: D. This was REALLY dull stuff and Bret got annoying after about his second interference. Granted that's the idea, but he was still annoying. On top of that, the match was WAY too much sitting around and doing nothing with all of the rest holds and other general standing around based activities. Sid was pretty much gone for good after this.

Undertaker celebrates for awhile as Shawn sucks up to him.

Overall Rating: D+. This certainly isn't the worse Wrestlemania but it's also not a good show by any real stretch. The main problem here is that it felt like any other PPV rather than a major show other than the Bret vs. Austin match. On top of that, the main event sucks pretty hard. It wasn't entertaining and Undertaker wound up being a terrible champion. He couldn't even main event his own PPV the next month. Anyway, bad show but DEFINITELY see Austin vs. Hart, even if you have before.

Ratings Comparison

Headbangers vs. Godwinns vs. Doug Furnas/Phillip LaFaon vs. New Blackjacks

Original: D+

Redo: C

Rocky Maivia vs. The Sultan

Original: D

Redo: D+

Hunter Hearst Helmsley vs. Goldust

Original: D

Redo: C-

Owen Hart/British Bulldog vs. Vader/Mankind

Original: D+

Redo: B-

Bret Hart vs. Steve Austin

Original: A+

Redo: A+

Legion of Doom/Ahmed Johnson vs. Nation of Domination

Original: B+

Redo: B-

Undertaker vs. Sycho Sid

Original: D

Redo: D

Overall Rating

Original: D

Redo: D+

The street fight is good but it's not THAT good.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/20/history-of-wrestlemania-with-kb-wrestlemania-13-hitman-and-austin-thats-it/>

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