

Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XV: And People Still Defend Russo?

Wrestlemania XV

Date: March 28, 1999

Location: First Union Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 20,276

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler

This is a somewhat forgotten show and it's pretty easy to see why: there isn't much on here worth seeing. We're full into Russo era now which means things are going to go REALLY fast but they'll be changing so rapidly that there's almost no lasting impact. The main event here is Austin facing Rock to get back the WWF Title that was unfairly stolen from him in the fall. That's also pretty much the only match anyone remembers from the show. Let's get to it.

Boyz II Men sing America the Beautiful. To say this is better than last year's metal version of it is the understatement of the year.

The opening video is about stars of today becoming legends and how tonight is their night. The show is called the Showcase of the Immortals, which it is still called to this day.

Hardcore Title: Billy Gunn vs. Al Snow vs. Hardcore Holly

So for months leading up to this show, Billy Gunn had been chasing the IC Title and Road Dogg had been chasing the Hardcore Title.

Before either of them got the big win, Russo thought it was a good idea to switch those things up and give them the opposite title than they were looking for. You know, because THAT MAKES SENSE. Gunn is defending if that wasn't clear.

Billy tries to do his intro but Snow jumps him from behind. Holly jumps both of them and clotheslines Gunn inside out. Snow and Holly, the only people who actually have business in this match, go to the

floor to annoy the Spanish broadcasters. Gunn follows them and is whipped knees first into the steps. That looked painful. Snow and Bob fight up the aisle with Holly hitting a suplex onto the concrete. Billy comes back and sends Snow into the steps but Al breaks up a piledriver attempt on Bob.

Snow finds a hockey stick from under the ring for no apparent reason and starts beating up both guys. The fans cheer for the Flyers as Billy uses a Gatorade bucket for good measure. Billy gets the stick and breaks it over his challengers' backs before going back inside. Snow comes in with a broom to pound away on both guys and take over. Gunn brings in a chair but gets beaten down by a piece of the broom. Al uses the chair to load up some Poetry in Motion in the corner but he can only hit Gunn.

Holly sends Billy to the floor but gets dropped onto the barricade for his efforts. Snow hits them both with Head but pulls out a table instead of going for a cover. The table is set up in the corner but Holly clotheslines his way to safety. Billy comes back with a shot to Bob's head and throws Snow through the table. The Fameasser onto a chair knocks Snow sane but Holly hits Gunn in the back with a chair and steals the pin on Snow for the title.

Rating: C-. This was fine but again, what sounds better: Road Dogg against two other hardcore experts or Billy Gunn who has had about two weeks in the division? The match here was nothing of note though as it was just the three of them hitting each other with the same spots we've seen a hundred times before. Nothing to see here for the mots part but it was a good enough opener.

Test and D'Lo Brown were the final two people in a battle royal on the Heat before the PPV, meaning they get a tag title shot. Seriously, that's how weak the division is at this point.

Tag Titles: D'Lo Brown/Test vs. Owen Hart/Jeff Jarrett

The challengers fight with each other before the match starts. Owen and Jeff have Debra with them who is in a jacket and bikini. From the neck down she's not bad at all. It's a brawl to start and Test hits a fast big boot to take over. Brown and Jarrett get things

going officially and D'Lo hits some fast clotheslines. Jeff charges into an elbow and it's off to Test. He's part of the Corporate Team while Brown has no connection to them whatsoever. A powerbomb gets two on Owen but he comes back with an enziguri, only to have Brown break up the Sharpshooter attempt.

Brown comes in legally and hits the shaky head legdrop for no cover but Jeff knees Brown in the back to give Owen an opening. A spinwheel kick puts D'Lo down for no cover as it's back to Jarrett. Brown comes back with a double clothesline to both champions and hits something resembling a Sky High on Jeff. There's no cover though as the managers (Ivory for the challengers) are fighting. In the distraction, Owen hits a missile dropkick on Brown to give Jeff the retaining pin.

Rating: C-. The match was ok enough but when the challengers are formed into a team 30 minutes before the match, it's a little difficult to get behind a match like this. The tag division was BEGGING for something to save them here but it wouldn't be until the fall when the Dudleys finally showed up and made the division worth something for a few more years.

Test and D'Lo fight on the floor which has no one caring at all.

We recap Butterbean vs. Bart Gunn in a Brawl For All fight. Oh where do I even begin? So Bart Gunn shocked all of eight people (as in the amount of people that cared) by winning the shoot fight Brawl For All tournament back in the summer. This led to a REAL fight against a REAL world boxing champion here. You know, EIGHT MONTHS after he won the tournament.

Bart Gunn vs. Butterbean

The guest referee is Vinnie Pazienza, former world Middleweight Champion. The judges are boxing trainer Kevin Rooney, Chuck Wepner and Gorilla Monsoon, who would be dead soon after this. He looks AWFUL here as he's lost about 200lbs due to illness. This would be his final public appearance. Bart is introduced as being from western Kentucky. That's probably accurate as there aren't many large towns over there so pinning it down to one single town is

hardly an option.

I'd explain the rules and scoring here, but Butterbean DESTROYS Bart and knocks him down twice in 35 seconds. The second is as brutal of a punch as you'll ever see. For the life of me I have NO IDEA what they were thinking here. I could watch Bart Gunn get knocked out like that for hours.

The San Diego Chicken is here in Philadelphia here for no apparent reason so Pazienza beats him up.

We recap Big Show beating up Mankind on Heat. They're fighting tonight to get to referee the main event. Austin could be seen watching this in the back for some reason.

Mankind says that he's done everything asked of him to be in the main event of Wrestlemania, but they keep throwing more stuff at him. If he has to beat Big Show, that's what he has to do.

Big Show vs. Mankind

The winner gets to referee the title match tonight. Big Show already cost Mankind the world title on Raw a few weeks ago and Mankind is banged up coming into this. Mankind pounds away to start but is easily sent out to the floor by the power of the giant. Mankind is all cool with a brawl though and he sends Big Show head first into the steps. A DDT is broken up by Show though and the guy in a mask tastes the steps as well.

Back in and Show chops him down before hitting a Russian legsweep for no cover. Mankind gets in a shot and loads up the Claw, only to be sent flying for a second. The Claw goes on but Show headbutts him down with ease. Back to the Claw and a low blow is enough to keep the hold on for a bit.

Despite being in a former world champion's hold for about a minute straight, Show gets Mankind on his back and crashes down onto Foley to break the hold. Foley's ribs are messed up bad now and Show stomps away even more. They head to the floor and Show hits him in the ribs with a chair....and that's not a DQ. Show throws two chairs into the ring and sets them up. He chokeslams Mankind through both

chairs and THAT is enough for the DQ.

Rating: D. Yeah this sucked. This would fall into the category of matches that were overbooked to overbook another match. If that doesn't sum up the Russo Era in a nutshell, I'm not sure what does. The match sucked on top of all that, as it was a very slow power brawl. Foley would take awhile to get back into form but at this point he was just kind of going through the motions.

Post match Vince comes out to yell at Big Show but has to talk his way out of a chokeslam. That's the least of his problems though as Big Show knocks Vince out cold with a right hand. The Stooges carry Vince to the back as Foley is taken out on a stretcher.

In the back, Vince wants the cops called.

Intercontinental Title: Road Dogg vs. Goldust vs. Ken Shamrock vs. Val Venis

Dogg is defending and this under elimination rules. Goldust has Ken's sister Ryan as well as Blue Meanie with him. A rana sends Goldust to the floor in the opening melee until we get down to Shamrock vs. Dogg as there are tags in this. Dogg gets in some right hands and a dropkick to Shamrock before bringing in Goldie to pound away on Ken. Venis replaces Shamrock and escapes the Curtain Call.

A spinebuster gets two on Goldust but he comes back with a clothesline to take Val down for two. Goldust loads up a superplex but slips off the rope, allowing Val to bulldog him down for two. A fisherman's suplex gets two for Val but after they collide in the corner, Val's face meets Goldie's crotch. Shamrock comes in to DDT Goldust but Dogg DDTs Venis at the same time, putting both guys out. Goldust covers Venis for two and Shamrock is furious at the kickout. Did I mention Val slept with Ken's sister of whom Ken is VERY protective? Dogg comes in illegally and pounds away on Val before doing the same on Dogg. The shaky kneedrop hits Shamrock for good measure but Val suplexes the champion down for two. Roadie comes back with the simulated anal rape pumphandle slam to Val before Shamrock puts Venis in the ankle lock.

Val somehow makes the rope and backdrops Shamrock to the floor. Venis goes out after him and it's a lame double countout to get us down to two. Shamrock comes back in anyway and beats up everyone left in the match while screaming and dropping a lot of F Bombs. Ryan trips Goldust for no apparent reason whatsoever, allowing Roadie to roll him up for the pin to retain.

Rating: C. Decent match until the ending fell flat. Here's Russo's booking in a nutshell: take Billy Gunn, as in the guy that started the whole mess with Ryan out and replace him with Road Dogg who only has the title in this whole mess. That leaves you with Ken as the jealous brother along with Val as guy who loved her and left her, and Goldust as the freak perverting Ryan's mind.

Then you give us Goldust and Dogg to finish things, despite them having no history of problems at all, unlike Billy and any of the three, who had been fighting for months. See the REALLY big issue here? Goldust would win the title the next night, making this even stupider. You know, because you want to change the title on Raw, not AT WRESTLEMANIA or someplace worthless like that.

Big Show is arrested, another Russo trope.

We recap HHH vs. Kane. Chyna had turned on DX and joined the Corporation I believe late last year. A few weeks before this she was holding HHH for a fireball shot from Kane, only to take it herself. HHH standing up for the honor of his friend who isn't his friend anymore because she turned on him. As an act of friendship, HHH painted himself gold and wore a flowery robe while imitating a crossdresser and launched a flamethrower at Kane, burning him again.

HHH vs. Kane

Kane is in the Corporation against his will at this point. As Kane makes his entrance, here's the San Diego Chicken from earlier to jump Kane. He's quickly unbeaked and it's Pete Rose again to continue the running joke from last year. At least he used to play in Philly so there's a connection to the town. After that ends, HHH sneaks through the crowd and hits Kane low to start, which actually hurts him now as opposed to previous attempts at it.

HHH pounds away to start but Kane keeps shoving him away. Kane charges into a backdrop to the floor though and they fight on the floor for a bit. Kane accidentally clotheslines the post and is sent HARD into the steps. A baseball slide puts Kane into the barricade before they head back inside. Kane boots HHH down and throws him right back to the floor. HHH climbs the steps but gets grabbed by the throat and crotched on the barricade. The Mean Street Posse is here for no apparent reason.

Kane rams the future Game's back into the post a few times before we head back in again. HHH gets slugged down in the corner and an uppercut keeps him down even longer. There's a big leg for two and HHH is in trouble. He gets shoved out to the floor again and Kane DIVES over the top to take him out again, getting almost no reaction from the crowd at all. Back in and HHH breaks up the top rope clothesline with a beal off the top.

HHH slugs away and hits a Pedigree to stagger Kane. The jumping knee to the face puts Kane down and here's Chyna. The tombstone and Pedigree are both escaped and Chyna slides in the steps. Both guys are down from something we didn't see due to the camera being on Chyna but it's Kane up first. He picks up the steps but Trips kicks them back into his face. Yes, he did something not involving his knees.

HHH hits a DDT onto the steps and clotheslines Kane to the floor. How has there not been a DQ yet? A Pedigree onto the steps is easily countered and we head inside where Kane hits the chokeslam. Instead of covering though, Kane lets Chyna come in with a chair. She hits Kane with it though, turning again and drawing a DQ in the process.

Rating: C-. Not bad here but HHH wasn't quite ready to hang in a feud like this. He was on the rise, but it would take the street fight at the Rumble to make HHH into a guy that could hang in a fight like this and make it look believable. Chyna turning was a feel good moment but it would wind up being rather stupid in the end. The match wasn't bad, but much like everything else tonight it's forgettable.

HHH saves Chyna with some chair shots and a Pedigree on the chair.

Vince says he'll referee the title match tonight. Again notice that all these angles are being used on the PPV that we already bought rather than to get people to buy the PPV that was already purchased.

Women's Title: Sable vs. Tori

This is just after Sable turned heel. She's defending against a psycho fan named Tori here who would wind up sleeping with X-Pac and Kane. Sable won't let her get in so she dances a bit. Tori, wearing a Catwoman/Giant Gonzalez body suit, pulls the champion to the floor and sends her into the apron a few times, only to get kicked in the ribs by Sable. You can actually see people coming in and going out with food in hand during this match.

Sable dives off the apron to take Tori out before we head back inside. Tori comes back with some shots to the face and a bad looking sunset flip. They BADLY screw up a backslide which gets two on Sable before a bad looking cross body takes out the referee. Cue Nicole Bass who makes Chyna look like a 12 year old girl to slam Tori down. She tells Sable to pin her and the title is retained off a Sable Bomb.

Rating: F. Do I need to explain this one? I didn't think so. Tori makes Aksana look like Trish and Lita combined if that tells you anything. Their sloppiness in this match was cringe worthy and Sable continues to not be able to do anything of note in the ring other than shake her hips and take her clothes off. Nothing to see here at all.

We recap Shane vs. X-Pac. Basically Shane has no idea what to do in the ring but thanks to the Corporation he took the European Title in a tag match. This led to some humorous skits about how tough the streets of Greenwich, Connecticut were and how Shane is the kind of the streets. Shane challenged Pac to a Greenwich street fight on Raw, allowing the Mean Street Posse to help beat up X-Pac. Tonight is about revenge.

X-Pac says he'll win because Chyna has come home.

European Title: Shane McMahon vs. X-Pac

Test is with the champion Shane here and the Stooges jump Pac in the aisle for good measure. Pac fights them off with ease and we're ready to go. Shane imitates a bad car by stalling a lot and the chase is on. Back inside and Shane gets a nice leapfrog but gets kicked in the face to take him down. Pac loads up the Bronco Buster but Test makes the save before the Buster can hit. Shane heads up the ramp but can't get away as the challenger brings him back to ringside. Test throws X-Pac into the post and Shane gets a breather in the ring.

McMahon pounds away on X-Pac in the corner and slams him down to set up a Corporate Elbow. Pac rolls away though, only to get caught by a low blow. Shane gets Test's belt and whips Pac's back as Cole talks about Shane getting disqualified. X-Pac sends him to the floor and there's the big dive to take the champion out. The Posse tries to interfere but gets beaten down for their efforts. An elbow puts X-Pac down back in the ring and a middle rope variety keeps him down. Shane goes up top but takes too long, allowing the Greenwich grapefruits to get crotched.

There's a superplex but Test breaks up the pin. X-Pac takes Test out and whips Shane with the belt for some revenge. Now the Bronco Buster hits but Test knocks Pac out with the title belt. That gets two for Shane but his own Bronco Buster misses. Test comes in for the 58th time but gets hit with a Bronco Buster of his own. Cue HHH and Chyna....who turn on X-Pac, joining the Corporation, THIRTY MINUTES AFTER THEY REUNITED IN DX. The Pedigree on X-Pac lets Shane keep the title.

Rating: D. In less than nine minutes, we had six people interfere, two different belts being used, a low blow, about five interferences by Test, and two people turning on X-Pac. This is all for a midcard title match with a guy that can't wrestle getting to keep the title from the fan favorite. Ladies and gentlemen, VINCE FREAKING RUSSO!!! The match sucked for the most part but Pac did what he could.

The Outlaws come out for a save but get beaten down for good

measure, because you fans aren't allowed to cheer. Now cue KANE to chase off the Corporation, basically turning face in the process. There's such a thing as WAY overthinking things and this is a good example of it.

We recap Undertaker vs. Big Boss Man. Basically Undertaker has gone cuckoo and is trying to take over the company while impersonating Satan. This led to a cross being burned on Vince's lawn and Stephanie's teddy bear being burned. Taker beat up Vince but Boss Man made the save. This leads to Hell in a Cell tonight, because that recap clearly is enough for a Cell match right?

Undertaker vs. Big Boss Man

Inside the Cell. In 1999. Just go with it. Boss Man DOESN'T EVEN GET AN ENTRANCE. WOW they're not even trying to hide that this is going to be one sided are they? Boss Man pounds away in the corner and Taker does the same for good measure. A clothesline puts Boss Man down for two as the uninspired stuff continues. Boss Man gets the same for two but a boot to the chest is blocked by Undertaker. They head to the floor with Boss Man being slammed into the Cell. Cole: "This is such a dangerous match. YOU CAN GET A FINGER CAUGHT IN THERE!" Just go with it.

Anyway Boss Man comes back with more punches to the face and handcuffs him to the cage. On the floor, as in where you can't get a win. Boss Man pounds away with the stick as the fans are REALLY not impressed. Undertaker falls down and the cuff is broken off the wall. Well that was rather pointless.

Taker is almost kind of maybe bleeding as he pulls out a chair. This is really boring so far. Boss Man goes face first into the wall as the fans are booing now. Taker hits the jumping clothesline but Old School is broken up, sending the Dead Man out to the floor again. Back in and the Tombstone is countered, only for the second attempt to hit a few seconds later.

Rating: F. No. Where's the real Cell match? You don't go from Shawn vs. Taker to "He may be broken in half" to this. That doesn't work and there's no reason to assume it does work. This was a terribly

boring match with the tiniest trickle of blood you can have while still officially having blood. Horrible match that would have been bad as a first hour match on Raw, let alone the next to last match on WRESTLEMANIA.

Post match the Brood lowers from the ceiling and breaks into the top of the Cell, lowering a noose into the ring. Boss Man is hung from the top of the cage in an unnecessary visual.

We recap Austin vs. the Corporation. Austin drove McMahon crazy for most of 1998 before Vince FINALLY got the title off of him in the fall. Rock won the vacant title by turning Corporate and becoming the Corporate Champion. Austin was screwed out of the Royal Rumble, but Shawn Michaels changed sides and gave Austin the title shot at Wrestlemania anyway.

Jim Ross comes out to call the main event. He's returning from a bout with Bell's palsy.

WWF World Title: Steve Austin vs. The Rock

Vince is guest referee due to the issues earlier tonight. Oh wait here's Shawn Michaels, the Commissioner, to say that Vince isn't referee and that it's going to be a normal referee. The Corporation is barred from ringside as well. Rock is defending if that wasn't really clear. The place of course goes INSANE for Austin, who for some reason is in an Austin t-shirt instead of the trademark vest. It's a brawl to start as you would expect with Austin being knocked out to the floor and sent into the announce table. Apparently Vince does have the power to make this No DQ.

Back in for more punching by Rock but he gets backdropped up and over to the floor a second later. They brawl into the crowd where we can barely see them but it's Philly so it has to be expected. Austin blasts the Rock in the back and they head back to ringside. Scratch that as they're already going back into the crowd on the other side of the arena. Back to ringside again and Austin is choked with a cable for a bit.

Now they fight up the aisle with Austin hitting a fast clothesline.

Austin loads up a piledriver on the concrete, only to be backdropped onto a light instead. Rock is thrown into some kind of equipment and they clothesline each other. Now it's Rock being choked by a cable and then being thrown into the Wrestlemania XV sign, which wobbles in a scary sight. Rock suplexes Austin in the aisle and spits some water in his face at the announce table. Austin drops him face first onto the barricade before laying him on the announce table for an elbow drop which doesn't break anything.

The second attempt at an elbow puts Rock through the table and we head back into the ring after about eight minutes of brawling. Wait Rock bails to the floor and wraps Austin's bad knee around the post. They're still not ready to stay in the ring as Austin sends Rock into the steps and stomps away a bit more. NOW we head back inside but Austin walks into the Rock Bottom for two. Rock brings in a chair but Austin takes it away and cracks the referee with it by mistake.

A Stunner is blocked and Rock elbows Austin down before laying him out with the chair. Another referee comes in for a two count off a chair shot to the head. Off to a chinlock for an understandably needed breather. Austin fights back up, only to be clotheslined right back down. Back to el chinlock but they fight up again, only for the referee to go down AGAIN. The Stunner hits but Earl Hebner runs down for a very close two. Here's Vince again as Austin gets a fresh chair.

The distraction lets Rock hit Austin low to block a chair shot and Vince gets in as well. Vince drops Hebner and it's a double team beatdown on Austin. Cue a hobbled Mick Foley to beat up Vince and count a fast two on Rock. The Thesz Press takes Rock down but Rock comes back with a clothesline and another Rock Bottom. Austin avoids the Elbow, fights out of another Rock Bottom, and Stuns his way to a third world title.

Rating: B-. This one really depends on your taste. They didn't try to have a regular match here at all and maybe that was the right idea. It's definitely the weakest of the Austin vs. Rock at

Wrestlemania trilogy but Rock wasn't ready to hang with Austin in a match like this year. The rematch at Backlash would be AWESOME to make up for this, but even this wasn't bad. It's very typical of the time, which doesn't make it dull. This was definitely entertaining, but it's certainly not for everyone.

Austin celebrates for a LONG time post match and stuns Vince for good measure to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. Austin vs. Rock is definitely worth seeing, but the fact that I couldn't think of a single match other than that one when I was getting ready to do this one says a lot. The show is completely forgettable because of how fast everything was moving out there. That doesn't make it entertaining, but rather bad most of the time and one of the worst Wrestlemanias ever.

Ratings Comparison

Hardcore Holly vs. Billy Gunn vs. Al Snow

Original: D+

Redo: C-

D'Lo Brown/Test vs. Owen Hart/Jeff Jarrett

Original: F+

Redo: C-

Butterbean vs. Bart Gunn

Original: F

Redo: N/A

Mankind vs. Big Show

Original: C-

Redo: D

Ken Shamrock vs. Road Dogg vs. Goldust vs. Val Venis

Original: D

Redo: C

Kane vs. HHH

Original: D+

Redo: C-

Tori vs. Sable

Original: F

Redo: F

X-Pac vs. Shane McMahon

Original: C+

Redo: D

Undertaker vs. Big Boss Man

Original: H (For holy goodness why was this a Cell match?)

Redo: F

Steve Austin vs. The Rock

Original: B+

Redo: B-

Overall Rating

Original: D

Redo: D

Individual ratings aside, it still sucks.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/22/history-of-wrestlemania-with-kb-wrestlemania-15-this-is-the-best-they-can-do/>

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