

Summerslam Count-Up – 2002: It Never Gets Old

Summerslam 2002

Date: August 25, 2002

Location: Nassau Veterans Memorial, Uniondale, New York

Attendance: 14,797

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

It's very rare that a Summerslam is the biggest show of the year but that might be the case in 2002. Wrestlemania XVIII was in a much bigger venue and had a much bigger top match but as far as a whole card goes from top to bottom, this might have it beaten. The big matches here are Brock Lesnar challenging the Rock for the Undisputed Title and HHH vs. Shawn Michaels in a grudge match with Shawn making his first in-ring appearance since 1998. Let's get to it.

Not much of an opening video other than the theme song over shots of the crowd.

Opening sequence.

Kurt Angle vs. Rey Mysterio

Rey showed Angle up recently and Kurt wants to prove that it's just a fluke. Angle's singlet looks like a barber pole and Rey sneaks in from behind with a springboard ankle scissors. The ankle lock goes on in less than thirty seconds but Rey sends him into the ropes with Kurt having to duck the 619.

A hard wheelbarrow suplex sends Rey hard onto the mat and one heck of a clothesline gives Angle two. Rey's back is bent around the middle rope and Angle is getting a bit too cocky. A one legged Liontamer has Mysterio in even more trouble but a rollup gives him a fast two. Rey is certainly sticking around well enough so far.

That just ticks Angle off though and he throws Rey with a belly to belly.

Kurt misses a charge though and goes sailing over the top but the referee won't let Mysterio fly. That's fine with Rey who flips OVER THE REFEREE to take Kurt down. The fans are losing their mind and Rey Dropping the Dime (springboard legdrop) for two makes them even worse. Now the 619 connects and the West Coast Pop is good for a VERY near fall. Rey puts him on top for a super hurricanrana but Angle slips out and grabs the ankle lock for the submission at 9:20.

Rating: A-. What a match. This is one of the best opening matches in company history as they just do not stop for the better part of ten minutes. It's an outstanding performance with Rey getting his big breakout performance and Angle showing that he's still one of the best in the world.

Stephanie McMahon brags about that match and tells a production guy to tell Eric Bischoff about it. She goes into her office and...there's Eric, who seems to be sharing the office with her. I'm sure comedy and drama will ensue.

Ric Flair vs. Chris Jericho

Standard "you're old and it's my time so get out" feud with the required broken guitars to ruin a mid-show concert segment as well. This is actually Flair's in-ring debut at Summerslam. Feeling out process to start and we hear about Jericho becoming the first ever Undisputed Champion. JR: "Not too many people can claim that." Yeah Jim. I think it's like, one or so.

Jericho misses an elbow drop and the chops start flying. They head outside with Jericho sending him into the barricade, followed by a middle rope dropkick for two back inside. Some suplexes stay on Flair's back so you certainly can't fault Jericho's psychology. This time it's Jericho taking too much time going up though and Flair slams him right back down.

The Walls are countered into a small package for two but Jericho goes extra evil by grabbing the Figure Four (I said evil, not original). In a creative save, Flair grabs the rope and then taps out, which means the hold is broken and the submission doesn't count. The referee gets bumped and it's a low blow into the Figure Four to make Jericho tap at 10:23.

Rating: C+. This was fine and while I'm not wild on having Flair go over Jericho, at least he lost in a good match to a dirty finish. If nothing else it could mean a whiny Jericho and that's nothing but entertainment. Oh and Flair low blows are always worth checking out, just for how hard he hits those things.

Ad for a Hogan DVD.

Paul Heyman loves the idea of the Hogan DVD because it looks like they're trying to squeeze out the final few dollars from his body after Lesnar destroyed him. Tonight, Lesnar destroys the Rock.

Eddie Guerrero vs. Edge

Apparently Eddie is mad that Edge fancies himself a sex symbol. I don't really remember that being brought up on TV leading up to this match but maybe it was subtext. Eddie snaps the back of Edge's neck across the top rope and takes over, only to get thrown across the ring.

Edge ties him up in the ropes and hits a spear but a second attempt misses to send the Canadian outside. That might mean a bad shoulder so Eddie sends him into the steps. Back to back DDT's on the arm including one from the top get two on Edge and we hit a Kimura of all things.

It's off to a crossface chickenwing and then a top wristlock which is a very good idea. I get so bored watching matches where we get the same hold over and over. There are so many holds that can be used on the same body part so mixing it up like this helps so much. Edge fights back with a one armed slam and a faceplant to send Eddie outside.

It doesn't take two good arms to dive out to the floor so Edge takes Eddie out all over again. Back in and a super sitout gordbuster gives Edge two more, followed by the Edgecution for the same. Eddie goes right back to the shoulder but walks into the spear (more on that in a second) at 11:47.

Rating: B-. This was going to be much higher until that completely ridiculous ending. Eddie spent eleven minutes working on the arm and then Edge just uses the shoulder for the spear to end the match with nothing

more than a flinch? There's no excuse for that and Edge should know better.

The Un-Americans are ready to give the greedy Americans more. More of the Un-Americans that is.

Tag Team Titles: Goldust/Booker T. vs. Un-Americans

Lance Storm and Christian are defending. Goldust cleans house to start before it's off to Booker, who JR describes as being "as Americana as Americana can be." The Canadians are still reeling so Storm throws Goldust over the corner to take over, setting up some of those weird hopping stomps.

Christian gets two on a backbreaker, which JR says works on the back. Something like a Boss Man Slam gets Goldust out of trouble but Christian grabs a front facelock. As you might expect, that means a missed tag so Goldust has to catapult the champions into each other.

That's STILL not enough for the tag though as the champs knock Booker off the apron, only to miss a Conchairto. The USA chant starts up and there's the hot tag to Booker who scores with a missile dropkick on Christian. Storm hits the referee by mistake and both champions take the same ax kick. Cue Test to kick Booker's head off, giving Christian the pin at 9:35.

Rating: C. The match was fine but the ending brought it down a good bit with the standard WWE style finish hurting things a lot. At least we had a good match to get there and the Un-Americans are still fine for heel champions. The Test stuff gets annoying but you had to know it was coming as soon as the ref went down.

There's a Make Out with Nidia Contest at the World. We're moving on before that sinks in.

Stephanie and Bischoff debate women's place in wrestling. McMahon: "It's like mine: ON TOP!" This turns into a discussion of the Intercontinental Title match and GOOD GRIEF Stephanie's acting is somehow worse here.

Intercontinental Title: Rob Van Dam vs. Chris Benoit

This is Raw vs. Smackdown and Benoit is defending. A kick to the leg sends Benoit outside but he comes back in and easily takes Van Dam down until Rob starts spinning around to escape. The release German suplex drops him again though and Benoit starts in on the neck to set up for the Crossface later on.

A Dynamite Kid snap suplex gets two on Van Dam but he avoids the Swan Dive. Chris does the same to the Five Star though and it's time for the Crossface. The long legs get Van Dam over to the ropes so Benoit shoves him off the top and down onto the barricade for a crash. Benoit cranks on the arms for a bit and slams him head first into the mat to keep Van Dam in trouble.

It's right back to the Crossface with Van Dam quickly breaking free, only to be sent shoulder first into the post. Some suplexes onto the arm make me realize that Eddie probably should have worked something other than the arm if Benoit, whose finisher is an arm hold, was going to do this.

Another Crossface is about to be broken so Benoit switches into a dragon sleeper of all things. That's escaped as well and Van Dam's hair is down in a very rare sight. Rolling Thunder gets two on Benoit but he's able to crotch Rob on top. You don't try a belly to back superplex on a high flier though as Rob crossbodies his way out, setting up the Five Star for the pin and the title at 16:22.

Rating: B. Sometimes you just need to have two talented guys go out there and have a match. The shoulder didn't quite play into the finish but at least Van Dam's finisher isn't done with his arm. I liked this more than I was expecting to and that's always a positive, especially on a show this stacked.

Bischoff gloats so Stephanie laughs at him. WELL OF COURSE SHE DOES! How dare we suggest that Stephanie not have some kind of ace up her sleeve? That's why people get tired of Stephanie: she almost NEVER has to give up anything and it gets old in a hurry. I'm sure she's stolen some other talent and Bischoff will be crushed while Stephanie gets to dance around and talk about how great Smackdown and its fans really are.

Video on the Un-Americans to set up Test vs. Undertaker.

Undertaker vs. Test

JR says Undertaker has a big home field advantage. I get what he's going for but we're MUCH closer to Canada and Toronto in general than we are to Houston. But then again, never underestimate how hard an American announcer is going to push his countryman in a feud like this. Undertaker starts with a hiptoss of all things but a knee to the ribs cuts off some driving shoulders.

Test shoves the referee into the ropes to break up Old School and since this isn't Raw, that's not a DQ. After a quick trip to the floor, Test very slowly hammers away in the corner and drops a knee on the ribs. It's off to an armbar of all things until Undertaker fights up and suplexes his way to freedom. AMERICAN freedom that is.

The pumphandle slam doesn't work so Undertaker plants him with a chokeslam for a delayed two. Cue Storm and Christian for a distraction so Test can get in the big boot for two of his own. Test grabs a chair and shoves the referee down, allowing Undertaker to kick the chair straight back into his face. The Tombstone ends Test at 8:20.

Rating: D. This was fine for a long Raw match but on a show with this much talent around, it's only going to go so far. Undertaker winning is fine enough as it's really hard to buy Test beating someone who was in the main event of last month's pay per view going toe to toe to toe with Rock and Kurt Angle.

Undertaker goes into the crowd and grabs an American flag for some posing.

We get a long and very good recap of HHH vs. Shawn Michaels. They used to be friends and Shawn came back as part of the NWO. After the team was disbanded, Shawn came back again and was made into HHH's manager. That wasn't cool with Shawn and his Texas pride so HHH beat him up twice in a row, including putting Shawn through a car window. Shawn is willing to have one more fight (not match, but fight) here tonight.

HHH vs. Shawn Michaels

Anything goes and unsanctioned with Shawn in jeans. Shawn hammers away to start and spears HHH down for more right hands. They're quickly on the floor with Shawn ramming him head first into the post. It's time for some toys, including a trashcan to HHH's head and a top rope right hand for the same.

Sweet Chin Music misses less than three minutes in and Shawn walks into a spinebuster for the first real shot to his bad back. Like a smart villain, HHH starts in on the back but Shawn says bring it, earning himself a kick to the chest. One heck of a chair shot to the back has Shawn's face in agony, which is where so much of this match's strength comes from. Michaels could tell such a story with his face and it really does bring you deeper into the story they're trying to tell.

Shawn gets in a desperation rollup for two but walks into the facebuster to cut him off again. A DDT on the chair gets two and we've got some blood. HHH steals Shawn's belt for a good old fashioned whipping followed by a few buckle shots to the cut head. With Shawn pulling himself to his feet, it's sledgehammer time. As is his custom though, Shawn cuts HHH off at the exactly right time, earning himself an abdominal stretch.

HHH goes for the hammer again but Earl Hebner calls him off and yells a lot. A superplex is broken up so HHH blasts him in the back with the chair again. There's a side slam through an open chair and Shawn looks dead. You can feel the fans getting more and more into this and JR wants the referee to do a fast count. Shawn kicks out and now HHH is getting frustrated because Michaels won't stay down.

Another side slam onto a closed chair gets the same and HHH covers three times in a row. The Pedigree is broken up by a low blow and you can feel the crowd coming back to life. HHH grabs the chair but a desperation superkick knocks it into HHH's face to draw blood as well. Shawn hits the forearm into the nipup and the fans actually come to their feet as it's the old Shawn one more time. A great chair shot to the head drops HHH and Shawn picks up the belt to even things up a bit from earlier.

Shawn bulldogs the very bloody HHH onto the steps to knock him even sillier. Since that's not enough, let's bring in a ladder too. Said

ladder is thrown inside but HHH baseball slides it into Shawn's ribs for a breather. HHH goes up top for some reason and it's a superplex to bring him back down for two. Now the steps are brought in but Shawn drop toeholds HHH into them before knocking him outside again.

With nothing else left, here's a table too with Shawn splashing HHH off the top through the wood. HHH very slowly rolls back in and Shawn brings the ladder inside again. The big elbow off the ladder crushes HHH and Shawn pops right back up. It's superkick time but HHH counters into the Pedigree which is countered into a jackknife rollup for the pin at 27:19.

Rating: A+. My goodness what a performance. That's the only way to put it as Shawn basically started all over again and had this kind of an amazing match. This was some outstanding storytelling with Michaels taking us to the very brink but fighting back until there was an actual way to believe he could pull it off. HHH was at his most dastardly here and that makes for one heck of a match. This is one of the best matches of both of their careers and the circumstances make it even more amazing. Shawn timed that comeback as well as anything I've ever seen and I got swept up in the match all over again. Just excellent.

Post match, HHH hits a celebrating Shawn in the back with a sledgehammer to go biggest heel ever. Shawn does a stretcher job, seemingly putting him out of action for a long time. Oh and one more thing: for some reason HHH has tried to claim that this match was forty five minutes long. Even if you count the entrances and the post match stuff, it's less than thirty six minutes total. That's a big stretch even in wrestling, which is covering a lot of ground.

Here's Howard Finkel of all people to talk about how he hasn't been here since Wrestlemania II but you'll always have him because of loyalty. Cue Trish Stratus (who has been feuding with a sexist Finkel) but the Fink doesn't want to hear from someone who thinks she's hot stuff because of her looks. Trish hits on him and Finkel makes sex jokes until Lillian Garcia (who is having the real issues with him) to slap Howard in the face and kick him low. This was just a way to calm things down after the previous match but it was still stupid.

We recap Brock Lesnar vs. The Rock. Lesnar won the King of the Ring tournament to earn this show and Rock won the title at Vengeance. Brock has run through the company but this is by far his biggest test to date.

Undisputed Title: Brock Lesnar vs. The Rock

Lesnar is challenging and has Paul Heyman in his corner. The fans are ALL OVER Rock as he charges right into a belly to belly, further banging up his already injured ribs. Some backbreakers have the fans cheering for Rock though and Brock takes him outside for a beating in the crowd.

Back in and another belly to belly sends Rock flying for two. Heyman even gets in a little choking as Rock's right hands are cut off by a powerslam. Brock charges into the post and three straight clotheslines finally put him down for two. It's off to a bad Sharpshooter with Rock nowhere near sitting on Brock's back.

Heyman finally gets on the apron for a distraction but Lesnar saves his agent from a Rock Bottom. The distraction lets a chair go into Rock's ribs, setting up a bearhug into a waistlock on the mat. This stays on WAY too long but to be fair, Lesnar isn't really capable of having a long match on his own just yet.

Rock punches his way out but takes one heck of a running shoulder to the ribs in the corner. Lesnar gets punched (you might notice a pattern emerging here) outside again and it's announcers' table time. Instead though Brock gets catapulted into the table and Heyman takes a very slow motion Rock Bottom through the table.

Back in and the Rock Bottom only gets two but Lesnar grabs one of his own (JR: "Brock Bottom?") for another near fall. The spinebuster looks to set up the People's Elbow but Brock jumps up for a BIG clothesline. Brock can't hit the F5 but reverses the Rock Bottom into the F5 for the pin and the title at 16:02.

Rating: B. It's not a classic but the key thing here is that Brock reversed Rock's finisher into his own for the completely clean pin. Heyman hadn't been a factor for about five minutes so the pinfall is WAY more important. Lesnar won because he was better here (ignoring the rib

injuries but that was hardly cheating). This was a good match but it's important and well done which is all that matters.

Overall Rating: A. This is one of the best pay per views the company has ever put on and pretty easily the best Summerslam ever. The worst match of the night was Undertaker vs. Test and even that was watchable. Throw in a masterpiece like HHH vs. Michaels and this is an instant classic, which isn't often the case at Summerslam.

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Ratings Comparison

Kurt Angle vs. Rey Mysterio

Original: A+

2013 Redo: A-

2017 Redo: A-

Chris Jericho vs. Ric Flair

Original: B

2013 Redo: C

2017 Redo: C+

Eddie Guerrero vs. Edge

Original: C+

2013 Redo: B-

2017 Redo: B-

Un-Americans vs. Booker T/Goldust

Original: C-

2013 Redo: D+

2017 Redo: C

Rob Van Dam vs. Chris Benoit

Original: B

2013 Redo: B

2017 Redo: B

Undertaker vs. Test

Original: D

2013 Redo: D

2017 Redo: D

Shawn Michaels vs. HHH

Original: A+

2013 Redo: A+

2017 Redo: A+

The Rock vs. Brock Lesnar

Original: C+

2013 Redo: B-

2017 Redo: B

Overall Rating

Original: A+

2013 Redo: A+

2017 Redo: A

Still a masterpiece.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/08/05/history-of-summerslam-count-up-summerslam-2002-best-summerslam-ever/>

And the 2013 Redo:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2013/08/07/summerslam-count-up-2002-the-performance-of-a-lifetime/>

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