

Royal Rumble Count-Up – 1998: You Can't Stop Destiny

Royal Rumble 1998

Date: January 18, 1998

Location: San Jose Arena, San Jose, California

Attendance: 18,542

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

It's the year of Austin and for once, the WWF is looking good going forward as the debacle that was the main event of Starrcade has caused WCW to hit a brick wall. The main event tonight is Shawn defending the title against Taker because he didn't want to face Owen Hart, the most logical opponent. Also there's the Rumble, which is obvious of a winner as there's been in years, but in this case that's ok. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about the two main matches as you would expect. The rest of the card doesn't mean much anyway.

Mike Tyson is in a skybox.

Vader vs. The Artist Formerly Known As Goldust

This is during Goldie's midlife crisis/PAY ATTENTION TO ME phase. These two had a great match at Clash of the Champions so maybe this won't suck. Goldust jumps him as Jerry is glad the gold one is in men's clothing again. Vader shrugs off the shots to the back and chases Goldust to the floor. Vader rams him into Luna as we hear about Austin not being here yet. Goldust is sent into the steps as Vader keeps control.

Back in and Luna trips Vader up, finally allowing Goldie to get in a clothesline. Another clothesline puts him down and Goldust works on the

leg a bit. Goldie drops a middle rope elbow to the ribs and we head back to the floor. Vader is sent into the steps so Luna can choke him a bit before we head back in. Goldust pounds away again but stops to kiss Vader. I may not be a pro wrestler, but I know better than to kiss a guy called the Rocky Mountain Monster.

Vader kills him with a clothesline and suplexes Goldust down before getting two off a splash. Vader loads up the Vader Bomb but a low blow stops him cold. Another clothesline puts Goldie down again and Vader sits on his chest. He loads up the Bomb again and despite Luna jumping in his back, Vader drops it anyway and crushes Goldust for the pin.

Rating: D. The place popped for the ending which did look cool, but other than that this was a messed up match. Goldust in this gimmick didn't really work because at the end of the day, he's still boring old Dustin Rhodes working the same standard style. It's not horrible but it's not a good choice to have on a PPV.

Austin gets here and tells Cole to park his truck. Southern Justice (the heel Godwinns) follow him, presumably to jump him.

Max Mini/Mosaic/Nova vs. Battalion/El Torito/Tarantula

Minis here with Sunny as the referee. Max Mini (more famous as Mascarita Sagrada) is by far the most famous of these guys as he's about 4 and a half feet tall but can move around very quickly. Nova and Tarantula start things off with Tarantula (on the heel team) being way bigger. Nova takes him down with some headscissors before it's quickly off to Battalion (military themed guy) vs. Max. Max armdrags him to the floor which brings in Torito, meaning we're in lucha rules (meaning sending someone to the

floor means another member of your team can come in without an actual tag).

Torito can actually get his head over the top rope, meaning he's just under the size of Rey Mysterio. Mosaic comes in and gets caught in a gorilla press and a release flapjack. A second flapjack attempt is caught in a wrist drag to send Torito to the floor and it's off to Tarantula. That goes nowhere so here's Battalion again. The fast tags continue as here's Nova vs. Torito already.

They both hit the floor so Mosaic speeds things up against Battalion again. Mosaic spins him around again a few times before it's back to Mini vs. Tarantula. Max gets caught in a spinebuster but goes up top almost immediately for a delayed rana. Max sends him to the floor and Tarantula backs off. Back in and Torito hits a Mafia kick to the back of Max's head and a chop puts him down again.

For no apparent reason Sunny picks Max up so he can dropkick the villains. I can only assume Sunny is there to give the fans anything to care about. Mosaic and Battalion go to the floor as does Torito so Max can hit his big dive. The others dive on them as well and it's a big pile on the floor. Back in Max rolls up Torito for the pin.

Rating: C. I'm going with a C because I have no idea what else to go with. I don't know who these people are, I have no idea why I should care, and I might have seen these guys twice other than this (aside from Max). These matches are really hard to get into because there's nothing to them. Much like a lot of the luchador matches in WCW had the same issue: why should I care about these people?

The Nation goes to attack Austin but only find an Austin foam finger.

The McMahons are in Tyson's sky box.

We recap Shamrock vs. Rock. Shamrock has charged through the Nation to get this shot at the unofficial leader of the team. Mark Henry joined the Nation to save Rock from Shamrock less than a week ago.

The Nation argues over which of them will win the Rumble. Rock says the fans of course want to know what he thinks of Clinton and Paula Jones, so he tells the President not to lie down with dogs or you might get fleas. This joke would be done way better over the next few weeks.

Intercontinental Title: The Rock vs. Ken Shamrock

Rock is defending of course. Feeling out process to start with Rocky trying to get a cheap shot in the corner. Both guys shove the other into the corner and Shamrock blocks a shot to the face before hitting one of his own. They run the ropes a bit until Shamrock kicks him in the chest and knocks the champion out to the floor. Back in and Rock pounds away a bit before hitting a corner clothesline. Ken comes back with some clotheslines of his own but the standing clothesline is countered into a hot shot for two.

They're trying to get out of first gear here but it's really not working that well. The champ pounds on him in the corner and but gets caught in a fisherman's suplex for two. Back to the floor with Shamrock going into the steps and then back into the ring. The spinning DDT gets two for Rock and it's off to the chinlock. Rock tries the spinning DDT again but gets

caught in a northern lights suplex for two instead.

Shamrock pounds away some more and gets two off a powerslam. The Nation comes out and sneaks Rocky some knuckles which go upside Ken's head for two. Rock hides said knuckles in Shamrock's trunks, just before getting belly to bellied for the pin and the title. Keep that in mind of course.

Rating: D+. Rock would get better, but at the end of the day this didn't work that well. It was mainly punching with both guys trying to throw in a move here or there. This feud never quite worked as well as they were shooting for I don't think and with Rocky holding the title forever, it didn't do Shamrock much good either.

Post match the referee finds the knuckles and reverses the decision. The referee is beaten up very badly for his efforts.

A Coliseum Video Exclusive from "moments later" show a clean and dry Shamrock in jeans attacking the Rock.

Los Boricuas attack someone that they think is Austin but find one of the Disciples of Apocalypse. Brawling ensues.

We recap the LOD vs. the Outlaws, which is old school vs. new with the Outlaws defending the titles. The Outlaws put a big old beating on the LOD and tonight is their return.

Tag Titles: New Age Outlaws vs. Legion of Doom

The Outlaws make fun of the 49ers who lost in the NFC Title game recently to the Packers. The LOD says that Animal's back is fine and they're putting the Outlaws on ice tonight. The Outlaws jump the challengers which goes badly in a hurry, as Animal powerbombs the Dogg. The champions try to walk out but get thrown back in so we can start with Hawk (who had one mohawk shaved off earlier in this feud) vs. Roadie.

Off to Animal as Road Dogg's mouth is bleeding. The pounding continues so here's Hawk for his one wrestling move in the neckbreaker. Gunn gets the tag and Hawk hits a freaking Lou Thesz Press of all things so he can pound away some more. Animal powerslams both Outlaws down and it's off to a reverse chinlock on Gunn. Hawk comes in for his second surprise move of the match in an STF.

That goes nowhere so it's back to Animal, who is tripped up by Roadie. They head outside where Animal is sent into the steps to finally switch the momentum. Hawk gets double teamed in the ring but clotheslines both Outlaws down (Animal is still legal) but charges into the post. Dogg finds some handcuffs and attaches Hawk to the post, making it a handicap match. Animal makes a comeback with a double clothesline, but Dogg hits him with a chair for the DQ.

Rating: D. So with an injury AND his partner tied up on the floor, Animal STILL couldn't lay down for a pin? Seriously? This match sucked and would have been just slightly better on Raw with less time. The LOD was nothing at this point while the Outlaws were finally starting to turn some heads. Until this point though, they were two jobbers with the titles who kept escaping with them. Brighter days were coming.

The Outlaws destroy Animal until Hawk snaps the handcuffs to make the save.

Some fan wins the Austin truck.

We recap the build up to the Rumble. Basically, everyone knows Austin is going to win and EVERYONE else in the Rumble is trying to stop him but not one has been able to slow him down at all. The only difference here: the fans were eating this stuff up with a spoon.

Royal Rumble

Cactus Jack is #1 and Chainsaw Charlie (Terry Funk) is #2. The intervals are supposed to be two minutes again this year but they would wind up being closer to 90 seconds. Terry brings his chainsaw into the ring so Cactus throws in a bunch of chairs. The referee finally gets the saw out and they pound on each other with chairs. Cactus hits Funk in the head with one, then hands the chair to Funk so he can return the favor. These two aren't exactly normal if you didn't catch that.

Tom Brandi is #3 and lasts about ten seconds. Terry punches Jack down but can't piledrive him on a chair. Cactus suplexes him through two chairs but can't put him out. Rock is #4 and both hardcore guys are down. Rock pounds on Terry in the corner but Cactus blasts him with a trashcan and the double beating begins. Cactus puts the can over Rock's head and they pound away on him, knocking him through through ropes and out to the floor. Funk hits Cactus low as Mosh is #5.

Mosh and Funk pair off as do the other two guys. Funk (the announcers are calling him that too) tries a moonsault but it winds up being more of a headbutt than a splash. Phineas Godwinn is #6 and helps Rock beat up Mosh. Not much happens for a bit until 8-Ball of the DOA is #7. Jack misses a charge and Funk backdrops him out to empty the ring out a bit. Apparently someone who might have been Ken Shamrock has attacked Austin.

Funk barely hangs onto the rope to avoid elimination until Blackjack Bradshaw (yes that Bradshaw) is #8 and looking as muscular as you'll ever see him look. We talk about Mike Tyson while things slow down a bit until Owen Hart is #9. Jeff Jarrett, the NWA North American Champion at the time in a strange invasion angle, attacks Owen on his way in. Yeah this is what Owen gets for not bolting to WCW after the Montreal Screwjob. Yes I know he was under contract but you know Vince couldn't hold him to it

in that situation. Hart can't get in the ring yet.

Steve Blackman is #10 and he has a hairy chest. 8-Ball piledrives Funk as there are way too many guys in the ring right now. Since people seem content to just tease eliminations on the ropes, no one is eliminated until D'Lo Brown is #11. Rock DESTROYS Blackman in the corner before getting in a fight with his Nation teammate D'Lo. Kurrgan, still a psycho monster at this point, is #12.

Thankfully he gets rid of some people like Mosh and....that's about it for now. Dang it clear the ring out a little bit already. You're a monster Kurrgan. Go destroy some villager. Marc Mero is #13, giving us a pop for Sable. Mero pounds away on Blackman in the corner but Kurrgan dumps Steve. Bradshaw pounds on Kurrgan as Rock teases not stomping his teammate before kicking away.

Ken Shamrock is #14 and he immediately kicks Kurrgan down. A big gang takes out Kurrgan as Rock hits the People's Elbow (not yet named) on Funk. Thrasher is #15, giving us Funk, Rock, Phineas, 8-Ball, Bradshaw, Owen (not in the ring), Brown, Mero, Shamrock and Thrasher, or as they're collectively known, WAY TOO MANY PEOPLE. Still nothing happens and Mankind is #16, confusing the announcers and immediately punching Funk out.

Shamrock finally gets his hands on the Rock as Mero asks Sable for praise. Goldust is #17 in a silver bodysuit with a thong painted on. A minute or so later he puts out Mankind but there are still way too many people out there. Jeff Jarrett is #18 and Owen runs in to beat him down. A spinwheel kick puts Jeff down, followed by Owen skinning the cat and dumping Jeff. Honky Tonk Man is #19 as HHH (on crutches) and Chyna come to the ring. Rock dumps Shamrock to complete Ken's humiliation tonight.

HHH gets on the apron and cracks Owen with his crutch to knock Hart out as well. Ahmed Johnson is #20, looking as bored as I can remember a wrestler looking in a long time. WAY too many people in the ring again. Mark Henry of the Nation is #21 and JR says Henry is "handling the big Johnson." There's no #22 which was supposed to be Skull, but he was jumped earlier remember.

Johnson is dumped out and he still doesn't look like he cares. He would be gone next month anyway. Phineas is out after a ridiculous 28 minutes. On top of being in too long, he accidentally kicks a referee in the head on the way down, giving him a legit concussion. Kama Mustafa is #23 to give the Nation four members at the moment. We're just waiting for Austin at this point.

FINALLY the glass shatters at #24 and the roof goes off the place. Austin comes in through the crowd because he's got ten people waiting on him as he comes in. There go Mero and 8-Ball and things slow down AGAIN, because we need at least ten people in the match at all times for some reason. Henry Godwinn is #25 and nothing happens. Savio Vega is #26, but since we STILL don't have enough people in the ring at the moment, he brings in the other three Boricuas to beat on Austin.

Thankfully Austin beats them out quickly but doesn't eliminate anyone. Faarooq is #27 to give us the entire Nation in the ring. He goes right for the other Nation members though as his face turn continues. Not that anyone cares mind you but he is indeed turning. Austin and Rock tumble through the ropes through the floor to brawl a bit because that's what those two guys do.

Dude Love is #28 to complete the running joke of the match. He immediately puts out Bradshaw as Goldust is on the floor but not eliminated. You can't see most of the mat because of how many people are in the ring at the moment. Austin pounds on Rock even more with Rock falling to the floor again. Chainz of DOA is #29 as Faarooq puts Brown out. More brawling ensues until Vader completes the field at #30. This gives us a final group of....hang on I need a breath first....Rock, Thrasher, Goldust, Honky Tonk Man, Mark Henry, Kama, Austin, Henry Godwinn, Vega, Faarooq, Dude Love, Chainz and Vader, or THIRTEEN PEOPLE.

Vader immediately pounds on Goldust and dumps Honky a few seconds later. Austin dumps Thrasher after an insanely too long 28 minutes. Austin puts out Kama to finally clear the ring out a bit. There goes Vega at Austin's hands as well before Goldust dumps Vader. Godwinn goes out as well before Faarooq puts out Henry. We're down to Rock, Austin, Love and Faarooq as Chainz was put out by Austin off camera.

The Nation members are thrown together and Rock gets hit by Sweet Shin Music and the double arm DDT. Austin hits Dude low and Faarooq throws Love out. Rock puts out Faarooq to give us Austin vs. Rock. They slug it out and Rock is thrown to the apron. Austin is fine with Stunning him and throwing him out to go on to Wrestlemania where he would claim his destiny.

Rating: D+. Austin was awesome as he always was in 1998, but the rest of this match pretty much sucked. As I said over and over, there were way too many people in there for the most part. Also you had WAY too many people getting time they didn't deserve. I mean did anyone need to see Phineas, 8-Ball, Bradshaw, D'Lo Brown and Thrasher all getting over 28 minutes? Not much to see here other than Austin and Foley's funny bit.

Tyson celebrates "Cole Stone" Steve Austin winning the Rumble.

We recap Shawn vs. Undertaker. Basically they feuded extensively in the fall but then after Montreal, Shawn didn't want to face Owen for a fear of him trying to legit hurt him. Therefore they rehashed Undertaker vs. Shawn for the title here in a casket match. Most of the video here is about the first Cell match, which is still amazing stuff. Oh and one more thing: DX (still just three people at this point) attacked Taker on Raw but Kane had saved his brother, uniting with him for the first time ever. That was six days ago, and remember that a certain Vince Russo is booking.

WWF World Title: Undertaker vs. Shawn Michaels

Like I said, Shawn is defending and this is a casket match. Taker throwing the lights back on makes Shawn jump out of the ring. It's a brawl to start and Taker immediately grabs Shawn by the throat. Shawn punches his way out of it but jumps into another choke by Taker. An attempt at putting Michaels in the casket doesn't work, but a backdrop that put Michaels out of action for four and a half years by slamming his spine onto the casket does work.

Shawn slowly gets up and is kicked into the casket but he immediately bounces out. We head back in with Taker missing an elbow but hitting Old School. Shawn gets whipped into the corner for the Flair Flip to the

floor, which is probably the last move he needed to do at this point. Back in and Shawn dives into a powerslam but Taker still can't slam the lid shut. Shawn comes out throwing powder and manages to get a breather. Taker is sent knees first into the steps and Shawn smashes the challenger's back with the steps.

A piledriver on the steps actually works for Shawn but he's got a broken back and can't follow up. HHH whacks Taker with the crutch (where is Owen if he's so angry?) as Shawn stays in full control. Back in and a jumping back elbow puts Taker down but he fights out of the casket. Shawn neckbreakers Taker before putting on a sleeper which is eventually countered into a Saito Suplex.

The forearm from Shawn sets up the nipup which sets up the top rope elbow. He must be either high as a kite on painkillers or on a huge adrenaline rush to be able to have a match like this at this point. The superkick knocks Taker out cold but Shawn is Shawn and stops for a crotch chop. Taker grabs him by the balls and we head back inside for the beating Shawn deserves. Another Flair Flip sets up the big boot, but Taker misses a clothesline and lands in the casket.

Shawn drops an elbow into the casket, closing the lid on both guys. Cool spot actually. Shawn crawls out but in a semi famous shot, Taker pulls him back into the casket, closing it with both guys inside again. Back in and Undertaker hits one of the biggest chokeslams he's ever hit followed by a JUMPING TOMBSTONE into the casket. The Outlaws and the Boricuas run in as we reenact Royal Rumble 1994, but here comes Kane to save the day. By save the day, naturally I mean turn on Undertaker and shut him in the casket to keep the title on Shawn and end the match.

Rating: B. Considering Shawn's back was literally broken in half during the match, this is a pretty awesome fight. When Taker gets ticked off and wants to hurt somebody, he can lay a beating out like few others in the world. Shawn struggling through a match in this condition is nothing short of great, and the fact that he survived Wrestlemania like this as well is perhaps the greatest physical accomplishment of all time.

Post match Kane nails the casket shut and hacks at it with an ax. He

pours gasoline inside and LIGHTS IT ON FIRE to end the show. Taker of course would disappear from the casket once it was opened up.

Overall Rating: D. Good main event aside, this was a REALLY dull show overall. 1998 would wind up being an awesome year, but this wasn't the best start to it in the world. We saw a lot of the relics of the bad times here, but Austin was coming and there was absolutely nothing WCW could do to stop him. This wasn't a good show at all, but it was a necessary evil to get us to the glory days.

Ratings Comparison

Vader vs. The Artist Formerly Known As Goldust

Original: B-

Redo: D

Max Mini/Mosaic/Nova vs. Battalion/El Torito/Tarantula

Original: B-

Redo: C

The Rock vs. Ken Shamrock

Original: C+

Redo: D+

Legion of Doom vs. New Age Outlaws

Original: D+

Redo: D

Royal Rumble

Original: D+

Redo: D

Shawn Michaels vs. Undertaker

Original: B

Redo: B

Overall Rating

Original: C-

Redo: D

...what in the world was I on back then?

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/18/royal-rumble-count-up-1998-austin-isnt-a-lock-to-win-please-believe-us/>

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