

Royal Rumble Count-Up – 1994: ...The Heck Was That?

Royal Rumble 1994

Date: January 22, 1994

Location: Providence Civic Center, Providence, Rhode Island

Attendance: 14,500

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Ted DiBiase

This is one of those shows where the good stuff is good but the bad stuff is REALLY bad. The main idea here is that someone has to stop Yokozuna, and it's going to be one of three people: Bret Hart or Lex Luger who could get the shot by winning the Rumble, or the Undertaker who has a casket match against Yoko tonight for the title. Oh...this is going to be a long night. Let's get to it.

Vince is on commentary here and gets to do his carnival barker stuff. The guy knows how to make a show sound exciting, I have to give him that. DiBiase comes out to do commentary with McMahon due to having to retire late in 1993 due to a bunch of injuries.

Tatanka vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

Bigelow is in Ludvig Borga's spot because Borga broke his ankle. Bigelow pounds on Tatanka to start and dropkicks him into the corner. Tatanka literally bounces off of Bigelow before coming back with a chop to take Bigelow down. A DDT puts Bam Bam down again but Tatanka goes up for a cross body, missing Bigelow by a mile. This is a REALLY hot start so far. Bigelow crushes Tatanka in the corner with a splash and things slow down somewhat.

Tatanka gets in a shot to the head and tries a top rope sunset flip, only to have Bam Bam sit on him. When all else fails, sit on the other guy. Off to a bearhug for about two minutes before Bigelow drops him with a shoulder block. Tatanka starts his war path thing so Bam Bam decks him in the head with an enziguri to drop him. The moonsault misses though and Tatanka goes up again, this time hitting the cross body for the pin.

Rating: C+. Shockingly hot opener here and if you cut the bear hug in half or so, this is a really solid match. They stuck to the formula really well here and the match was good as a result. This is one of the nice surprises in wrestling: on paper this sounded horrible but it turned out to be a pretty nice match. Good opener.

We recap the tag title match, which is a rare instance where it's all about the challengers rather than the champions. Owen Hart was the only Hart Brother eliminated in the Survivor Series match against Shawn and his Knights, which ticked him off. Owen had been whipped into Bret on the apron and the distraction let Shawn roll Owen up for the pin.

This caused Owen to cut a heel promo, talking about how he was tired of being in Bret's shadow and wanting a match with him to escape it. Bret of course said no, but instead offered to team up with Owen to get his brother his first championship. Owen talked about leading the team but seemed genuinely ok at this point. For some reason we also see the Quebecers losing the tag titles to the 1-2-3 Kid and Marty Jannetty for a single week for some reason.

The Harts talk about all the teams they're going to give title shots to once they win the belts tonight.

Tag Titles: Bret Hart/Owen Hart vs. Quebecers

The Quebecers are managed by Johnny Polo, who would change his name to Raven in ECW. Pierre and Bret start things off with the challenger taking over. Off to Owen to work on the arm with his signature spinning counter to a wristlock. Off to Jacques and they botch something, but Owen hits a quick suplex to keep things on track. An enziguri gets two for Owen and it's back to Bret.

After a bunch of rollups by Bret, everything breaks down and the Quebecers take over. Actually scratch that as Owen hits a kind of spear into a rollup for two and the Harts stand tall. It's Bret vs. Jacques with Hart in control until it's back to Owen for a gutwrench suplex for two. Bret comes back in, only to get powerslammed down by Pierre. A pair of knees to the back gets two and it's back to Jacques.

That goes nowhere so Pierre comes in to jump into a boot. Owen comes back in and belly to bellies Jacques down before hooking the Sharpshooter. Pierre bulldogs Owen down for a fast save of course and it's back to Pierre legally. Owen dropkicks both Quebecers down and it's off to Bret again. For some reason both champions are allowed to stay in the ring for way too long. Pierre is atomic dropped to the floor, and now we get to the turning point of the match: Johnny Polo holds the ropes open to send Bret to the floor. Bret comes up holding his knee and he's in big trouble.

Pierre rams the knee into the barricade to further the damage and the match turns into a kind of sloppy brawl on the floor. Owen finally throws Bret back into the ring and the leg work begins. Jacques puts on a half crab but Owen makes a fast save. The champions load up the Cannonball (kind of an aided Swanton) but Bret rolls away. Instead of tagging though, Bret tries the Sharpshooter...and the referee stops the match for the knee injury.

Rating: B-. This is one of those matches where you can look at it in multiple ways. From a match standpoint, it's a standard tag match with the faces and heels doing exactly what they would be expected to do. On the other hand, the idea here was about setting up Owen's heel turn, and the ending does that perfectly. There was no reason for Bret to not tag at the end and it sets Owen off as it should.

Post match Owen glares at Bret and paces back and forth. Bret manages to pull himself up but can barely stand up. Owen kicks the leg out, officially turning heel to HUGE booing. He leaves so here are some officials to come check on Bret. Ray Rougeau, a reporter for WWF at this point, comes out to interview Bret while he's on his back in agony. For some reason that cracks me up.

Owen is in the back and goes on a huge tirade about how selfish Bret is and how Bret cost him the biggest match of his career. Bret is being carried to the back and has to watch this promo on the video screen. Owen's face here is great as he unleashes all this pent up anger and frustration on Bret, saying he'll win the Rumble because he doesn't have to count on Bret. This would be the top feud for the next eight months or

so.

Intercontinental Title: IRS vs. Razor Ramon

Guess who is defending here. JR and Gorilla Monsoon do commentary for this match. IRS goes on a big rant about how evil the crowd here is for not paying their taxes, even though they have about three months left to file. Razor goes off on IRS to start, knocking him out to the floor. IRS comes back with some forearms but Razor punches him right back down to take over again.

Ramon hits a bunch of basic stuff like atomic drops and clotheslines for some two counts, but IRS ducks under a clothesline to send Razor out to the floor. Back in and IRS goes up but jumps into a boot. For one of the only times I can EVER remember this happening, IRS avoids the foot and drops an elbow for two instead. WHY IS THAT SO HARD FOR PEOPLE TO DO???

We hit the chinlock for well over a minute before Razor fights up and hits the fallaway slam. The referee gets knocked out in the corner and IRS grabs his briefcase, only for Razor to take it back and clock him in the head with it. No referee though, so Razor loads up a belly to back superplex. There's still no referee, so Razor sets for the Edge, only to have Shawn run out and clock him with the fake IC Title. IRS finally wakes up and pins Razor for the title.

Rating: D+. This wasn't bad but the overbooking hurt it a lot. This should have lasted about three minutes less and it would have been a lot better. Oddly enough I don't remember IRS being champion at all, but then again this is the remastered version so maybe they really cleaned things up.

Or maybe another referee comes out to explain the interference and the match is restarted. Razor hits the Edge to retain.

Bearer and Undertaker are making a coffin for Yoko.

We recap the world title match, which is Yoko being scared of Taker and Taker being one of the last hopes to stop the monster. Apparently the contract was signed before Yoko and company knew it was a casket match.

Taker I believe debuted his popping out of the casket spot in this feud.

WWF World Title: The Undertaker vs. Yokozuna

They stare each other down to start and Taker fires off his uppercuts to stagger the champion. A clothesline puts Yoko down and another uppercut puts Yoko on the floor. Taker is sent into the steps and it's immediately no sold, scaring Yoko to death again. There's Old School but the jumping clothesline misses as Yoko ducks. Why does no one else ever think of doing that?

They fight over a chair on the floor which winds up going upside Yoko's head. There's a plastic chair to the back of the champion but Yoko grabs the trusty salt to blind Taker. Now it's Taker's back getting hit with the chair and we head back inside. A clothesline puts Taker down but he fights out of the casket. Taker wins a slugout in the middle of the ring but Yoko belly to belly suplexes him down. Come on. You know that's not holding him down. Taker pops up and grabs Yoko by the throat and hits a DDT to put the champion down again.

Yoko is placed in the casket but here's Crush to block Taker from closing it. Taker slugs him down so here's Great Kabuki and Tenryu but Taker beats them down as well. Yoko is still out cold in the casket. Bam Bam Bigelow comes in now and it's 4-1 in the ring. One has to wonder why Paul Bearer doesn't go over and close the casket but this match doesn't seem to be the most logical one. Fuji and Cornette have stolen the Urn.

Yoko finally gets out of the casket as Bearer beats up Fuji and Cornette, stealing the Urn back. He uses it to recharge Taker, who fights off all four mercenaries. Now it's Adam Bomb to make it technically 8-1 but Taker fights everyone off with the salt bucket. Jeff Jarrett comes in as well, as do the Headshrinkers. That makes it NINE wrestlers (Yoko, Crush, Kabuki, Tenryu, Bigelow, Jarrett, Samu, Fatu, Adam Bomb) against Undertaker.

AND HE GETS UP. Diesel comes out and they get Taker in the coffin but he fights ALL OF THEM OFF. Yoko steals the Urn and hits Taker in the head with it before opening the Urn. Green smoke comes out of it and Taker now is powerless. Everyone hits a bunch of moves on him as this goes on WAY

too long. After ALL THAT, Taker is put in the coffin and Yoko retains the title.

Rating: F. On a major wrestling show, The Undertaker just fought off ten men until green smoke was released to drain him of his power. I've seen Japanese anime that makes more sense than this. Oh and the match itself, as in the one on one part, might have gone about six minutes.

BUT IT GETS WORSE!

The heels all push the coffin away when a gong goes off. Smoke comes out of the casket....and a FREAKING CAMERA FEED FROM INSIDE THE CASKET POPS UP ON THE SCREEN. Taker says his soul lives in everyone and he can't be extinguished. He says there's going to be a rebirth of the Undertaker and he won't rest in peace. Then electrical noises go off and we get something like an inverse camera shot (as in it's all in black and white but what is white is black and what is black is white).

Then, to REALLY hammer home the point, the image on the screen starts to rise up through the top of the screen (which should be the top of the casket, meaning it should be ramming into the people that put him in the freaking casket) and A FREAKING BODY RISES OUT OF THE TOP OF THE SCREEN. AS IN A TANGIBLE BODY (which might have been played by Marty Jannetty).

In other words, WWF just said Taker is something like Jesus. Oh and one other thing to really make sure this is stupid: YOU CAN'T SEE IT. All I can see are some quick shots of it when flashes go off. This is one of those things that embarrasses me as a wrestling fan. I mean....WOW.

The usual Rumble interviews eat up some time.

Royal Rumble

Scott Steiner is #1 and Samu is #2. Also the intervals are every 90 seconds this year so the entrances will come in faster than ever. Scott pounds away to start and hits a butterfly suplex as Samu tries to hang on. He does indeed survive and kills Scott with a clothesline. Rick Steiner is #3 and Samu is in BIG trouble. After some suplexes he's out very quickly (but not before getting his head caught in the top and

middle rope which is always kind of scary looking), giving us the Battle of the Steiners.

That battle literally lasts six seconds as Kwang (Savio Vega in a mask, allegedly Asian here) is #4. Scott suplexes Kwang down and Owen Hart is #5 to BIG heel heat. The heels take over and Owen actually dumps Rick out. That's one of the rare times where the constant pushing against the ropes worked. Bart Gunn is #6 and things speed up a bit. No one really does anything so here's Diesel at #7. This is where things pick up as this match is without a doubt Diesel's coming out party.

He beats on everyone and throws out Bart, Scott, Owen and Kwang inside of 45 seconds. Bob Backlund is #8 and immediately goes for the leg. He actually gets Diesel up against the ropes and upside down, but Diesel will have none of that. Who would believe these two would have a world title match in Madison Square Garden later in the year? Backlund is gone quickly. Billy Gunn is #9 and doesn't even last fifteen seconds.

We cut to the back where Kabuki and Tenryu are destroying Lex Luger. After Diesel stands around for a bit, he has to throw out Virgil who is #10 in about thirty seconds (causing DiBiase to laugh loudly and get in some good verbal jabs). Note that the fans are LOUDLY chanting for Diesel here, who had NEVER gotten a reaction until this point. No one has been able to stand up to Diesel at all so far. #11 is Randy Savage. This should be a bit better challenge I'd think.

Savage goes right for him and pounds away on the big man in the corner before peppering him with jabs. He has Diesel in trouble but Jeff Jarrett is #12 to save the not yet Big Daddy Cool. We hear about Jarrett wanting to become WWF Champion so he'll be a famous country singer in Nashville. And people wonder why he never got over until he completely changed everything about his character.

Savage is thrown to the apron by Jarrett but Randy comes back and eliminates Jeff with ease. Crush, who Savage HATES at this point, is #13. Diesel just kind of chills in the corner as Savage beats up Crush. The numbers finally catch up with Savage though until Crush eliminates him with ease. Doink is #14 and he gets beaten up as well but not tossed.

Here's his big rival Bam Bam Bigelow at #15 and it's 3-1 now. Bigelow easily thows the clown out ala the Spike Dudley throw from ECW.

Mabel is #16 and dang there are some big guys in there. He goes right for Diesel in a terrifying preview of Summerslam 95. Mabel cleans house until Sparky Plugg (Bob Holly as a racecar driver and debuting here as a replacement for the 1-2-3 Kid) is #17. Shawn Michaels is #18 and stares down Diesel to start. Everyone gets on Diesel and Shawn gives the final push to eliminate him. Diesel gets a VERY audible ovation and chant as he leaves.

Mo, Mabel's totally useless partner, is #19. Nothing of note happens so here's Greg Valentine in a one night only appearance at #20. Mabel misses a charge in the corner and Shawn is gorilla pressed by Crush but not eliminated for some reason. Tatanka comes in at #21. To recap we've got Plugg, Valentine, Tatanka, Mabel, Bigelow, Crush, Michaels and Mo in there. Valentine puts Michaels on the apron but can't get him out.

Kabuki is #22 and almost everyone gangs up on Mabel to dump him out. It's amazing how much easier it is to see with the big fat purple tub of goo out of there. Lex Luger (looking FINE after that attack like 15 minutes ago) is #23 and he cleans house. There are ten people in the ring right now but there goes Kabuki at the hands of Lex. Luger clotheslines Bigelow down and here's Tenryu at #24.

There are WAY too many people in there right now. Like seriously, do we need FREAKING MO in there? Or Valentine? Those are bodies you could dump out and no one would care. Luger and Tenryu go at it as Shawn is almost dumped out. Bastion Booger is supposed to be #25 but he's not here for some reason (Vince says it was supposed to be Bret Hart but more on that in a bit). I believe there are nine people in there at the moment so Booger not coming in was a good thing. Granted it was a good thing either way but you get the idea. Rick Martel is #26 and nothing happens.

For your big face pop of the match (other than Diesel): Bret Hart is #27 and limping very badly. Today, people would have a bandage on the knee and charge to the ring because modern wrestling is stupid. Fatu is #28 and DEAR FREAKING GOODNESS THROW SOMEONE OUT ALREADY! A bunch of guys

team up and FINALLY throw Crush out as Marty Jannetty is #29. Naturally he goes right for Shawn and punches Shawn to the apron.

Adam Bomb is #30, giving us a ridiculous THIRTEEN FINAL PEOPLE in the Rumble. The final group is Bigelow, Sparky, Shawn, Mo (seriously, FREAKING MO?), Valentine, Tatanka, Luger, Tenryu, Martel, Hart, Fatu, Jannetty and Bomb. Bret saves Shawn (shocking I know) to dump out Sparky, thank goodness. Bret beats on everyone as we still need to get rid of more people. Everyone beats on everyone for awhile and nothing is happening. DiBiase: "The smart thing to do is go after Bret Hart's knee." Vince: "The smart thing to do is throw people out of the ring." Did...did Vince just burn Ted Dibiase?

Martel dumps Valentine but is quickly dumped out by Tatanka. Luger throws out Bomb and Mo is FINALLY put out as well. Bigelow tosses Tatanka and Lex forearm Bam Bam out. Jannetty goes out to get us down to Luger, Hart, Fatu, Tenryu and Shawn. Tenryu rams Shawn and Fatu's heads together which only hurts Shawn of course. Luger and Bret put out Tenryu and it's Bret vs. Shawn (duh). Luger goes for Fatu's head and gets superkicked for being stupid.

The heels put Luger on the apron but he fights them both off and clotheslines Fatu into a 360. Bret dumps Fatu and Luger dumps Shawn and we're down to two. They slug it out and Luger picks up Bret, but they both fall out at the same time, giving us a double elimination to end the Rumble.

Rating: C+. This is a hard one to grade. The pacing is TERRIBLE with guys like Sparky Plugg and Mo staying in for over twenty minutes each, but the action is solid for the most part. The stuff with Diesel is excellent and it truly made him a star. The ending stuff once they got rid of about seven guys in 90 seconds was good too, but stuff in the middle didn't work all that well.

Post match there's a disagreement over who wins but both guys have their music played. This would lead to a somewhat complicated decision where there was a coin toss and two world title matches at Mania. This goes on for about eight minutes or so but it's just the referees arguing and both

guys saying they won. Replays don't really show us anything either. They do a good job here of making it impossible to tell who won, unlike in 2005 when it was clear that one of them (I want to say Cena) hit first. They're finally declared co-winners to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. This show is one where it's very hard to come up with an overall grade. I really liked the opener and the tag match and Rumble were both good, but when a show has what might be the dumbest moment in wrestling history (and that covers A LOT of stupid moments), it's brought down a lot. Early 1994 was not a good time for the WWF but once they finally picked Bret as the guy, things got a lot better.

Ratings Comparison

Tatanka vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

Original: B

Redo: C+

Quebecers vs. Bret Hart/Owen Hart

Original: A+

Redo: B-

Razor Ramon vs. IRS

Original: C+

Redo: D+

Yokozuna vs. Undertaker

Original: F

Redo: F

Royal Rumble

Original: B

Redo: C+

Overall Rating

Original: B

Redo: C-

DANG I liked this show a lot better on the first viewing.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/13/royal-rumble-count-up-1994/>

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