

Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania II (2015 Redo): The Hogan Formula

Wrestlemania II

Date: April 7, 1986

Locations: Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, New York City, New York/Rosemont Horizon, Chicago, Illinois/Los Angeles Memorial Sports Arena, Los Angeles, California

Attendance: 16,585 (New York), 9,000 (Chicago), 14,500 (Los Angeles), 40,085 (Total)

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Susan St. James (New York), Gene Okerlund, Gorilla Monsoon, Cathy Lee Crosby (Chicago), Lord Alfred Hayes, Jesse Ventura, Elvira (Los Angeles)

This is basically three miniature shows combined into one big card. Each city would have its live action and then they would get to watch the shows from the other cities. It's not the best idea in the world but like I said, there's only so much they can do with the position they're in. Let's get to it.

Vince McMahon is in New York to welcome us to the show and introduce Ray Charles to sing America the Beautiful. As would become the custom, various images of American landscapes, military and run of the mill citizens are superimposed over the performance. Charles does an amazing rendition of the song and the fans give him the ovation he deserves.

Gene Okerlund is in Chicago to talk about the battle royal. By talk about I mean he mentions it and then throws it to the next interview.

Roddy Piper is ready for his boxing match and has trainer Lou Duva (who trained names such as Lennox Lewis and Evander Holyfield) in his corner. Piper says he'll quit everything from wrestling to tiddlywinks to dating girls if Mr. T. can knock him out. He won't quite Bob Orton of course. However, even if Mr. T. knocks him out, he'll never, and I quote, "shave his head like an Indian and paint himself black."

The Magnificent Muraco vs. Paul Orndorff

Muraco is a heel technician who was a very good hand in the ring. This is fallout from last year as Orndorff took the fall in the main event and Piper has sent Muraco to get some revenge. They trade slams to start and the crowd is already white hot. Orndorff is nice enough to make a slant eyes gesture at Muraco's manager Mr. Fuji. Orndorff takes him down again as Susan St. James (an actress) is staying with this on commentary but clearly has almost no idea who these people are.

Paul cranks on the arm and my goodness Muraco is sweating quite a bit. We hit a wristlock, which St. James calls an ancient Chinese technique. At least she sounds happy to be here so I can excuse some of her bad lines. Muraco gets in a right hand and they brawl to the floor for a double countout at 4:10. The fans loudly swear at the result.

Rating: D. This had no time to go anywhere and I have no idea who thought this was the right way to open a show. I mean, it's Wrestlemania. It's ok to actually have a fall here instead of trying to set something up for later. The match wasn't even any good and that's not how you want to set the tone for one of the biggest shows of the year.

Mr. T. says he's fighting for his friend the Haiti Kid, whose hair was cut by Piper and Orton. Fink's announcement of the double countout drowns out a lot of his words.

Intercontinental Title: Randy Savage vs. George Steele

Steele, a crazy bald man with an incredibly hairy torso, is challenging and is totally in love with Savage's manager Elizabeth. Savage debuted last year and has taken the company by storm, including taking the Intercontinental Title from Tito Santana earlier in the year. Randy goes to the floor to start before running again from Steele's waving arms. He runs again and we're waiting on the first contact nearly a minute in.

Savage isn't fast enough this time though and George bites his leg as the champion tries to get back inside. Back in and Steele looks at Elizabeth, allowing Savage to hit him in the back and get two off a high cross body. That's not a move you often see from Savage. Steele throws him to the

floor so the champ crawls under the ring and comes around to the other side for a knee to George's back. That's fine with George as he bites Savage's arm and takes over again.

Randy bails to the floor and finds a bouquet of flowers but George shoves them in his face. This is a really uneven comedy match so far and it gets even worse as Steele goes to eat a turnbuckle but opts to shove the stuffing in Savage's face instead. Steele goes after Elizabeth at ringside, allowing Randy to ax handle him off the apron. Back in and the top rope elbow gets....two? That's a very, very rare kickout but it doesn't matter as Savage rolls him up and throws his feet on the ropes to retain at 7:08.

Rating: D-. What the heck was that? I know Steele had been feuding with Savage for a long time but this was the best they could do for a major match? Total disaster here with the comedy not working and Savage just coming back and grabbing a win at the end. Savage winning was the right idea, but you could have cut a lot of the goofiness out of this to make for a better, or at least less bad match.

George eats another turnbuckle and chases the referee off.

Big John Studd and NFL player Bill Fralic talk trash before the WWF vs. NFL battle royal in Chicago. The announcement of Savage retaining in New York drowns out the yelling.

McMahon and St. James talk about the next match.

George Wells vs. Jake Roberts

Roberts is another newcomer and this is the high point of Wells' career. George grabs a quick backdrop to start and Jake can barely stand up. They head outside (notice Jake sliding out like a snake) for more punishment to Jake, followed by a nice flying shoulder from George (ex-pro football player) back inside. Wells knocks him into the ropes but opts not to cover. A good looking powerslam gets two on Jake but he comes back with a thumb to the eye. Jake slides to the floor and gets George to chase him back inside, setting up the DDT for the pin at 3:08.

Rating: D+. This is probably the best match of the night so far and it's just a step above a regular TV match. Jake was clearly going to be something interesting long term but he was still establishing himself at this point. Well could have been any given warm body here and that's still a normal spot to have on these early Wrestlemanias.

Jake wraps the snake around Wells post match, making Wells foam at the mouth.

We recap Mr. T. vs. Roddy Piper, which started up again after Mr. T. won a boxing match on Saturday Night's Main Event. Piper wanted to fight him next but Bob Orton helped Piper beat him down instead.

Out in Los Angeles, Hulk Hogan is ready for King Kong Bundy in the cage because he doesn't like people who take shortcuts. This show is all over the place so far.

We introduce the celebrities for the boxing match. Comedienne Joan Rivers is guest ring announcer and introduces NBA star Darryl Dawkins, singer Cab Calloway and Watergate participant G. Gordon Liddy. Herbert, a character in Burger King commercials at the time, is guest timekeeper. There are no words to describe the drop from Liberace, Billy Martin and Muhammad Ali to....this.

Mr. T. vs. Roddy Piper

Boxing match. Piper has Lou Duva as his trainer and Mr. T. has Joe Frazier. They circle each other to start with Mr. T. hiding behind his gloves and bobbing away from Piper's punches. The referee keeps having to break up their brawls against the ropes and not a lot has happened so far. Both guys get in a few quick flurries before the first round wraps up.

Round two begins with Mr. T. claiming that Piper has a bunch of grease on his face. Mr. T. gets him into the corner and hammers away as these are clearly fake punches since both guys would be dead otherwise. Piper gets in some heavy rights in the corner and actually knocks him down to a big cheer from the crowd. Even more bombs have Mr. T. in trouble as the round ends.

Between rounds, Orton throws water at Mr. T. in the corner because he's a villain like that. Mr. T. starts the round well as he basically shoves Piper down into the corner with some punches thrown in as bonuses. Roddy is up at eight so they shove each other, followed by a big left that clearly barely made contact but knocks Piper all the way out to the floor anyway. Back up and the round ends with little else happening.

Piper throws his stool at Mr. T. to start round four and they stand there trading bombs for a bit. Piper starts getting the better of it including a huge right hand that knocks out Mr. T.'s mouthpiece. Mr. T. does the same as St. James wants this to stop. As do the fans now as they're cheering for Piper. With nothing else working, Piper slams Mr. T. down and it's a DQ because of course it is.

Rating: D+. As fake as the punches clearly were, this was actually pretty entertaining at times due to how hard they were hitting each other. On top of that, I'll take this over Mr. T. trying to wrestle again because that could have been an even bigger disaster. This was your standard boxing match on a wrestling show and that's all they could have done here.

Off to Chicago. The ring looks much smaller here.

Women's Title: Fabulous Moolah vs. Velvet McIntyre

Moolah is defending. McIntyre is an Irish wrestler who was one of the more popular women in the division in the 80s. Moolah hair drags her around to start but McIntyre comes back with some one footed dropkicks. Velvet misses a middle rope splash though and Moolah gets the pin at 59 seconds. It's not entirely clear why this ended so fast but Velvet's top might have snapped on that landing. You can definitely see Velvet adjusting her top which looks very loose. She gets out of the ring very quickly as well.

Nikolai Volkoff vs. Corporal Kirchner

This is a flag match meaning the winner gets to wave his country's flag. Kirchner is considered one of wrestling's all time toughest guys and would wind up wrestling in Japan under the name Leatherface. Volkoff

throws him to the floor to start and posts the Corporal before biting his forehead. Back in and Kirchner hammers away (with the ring being VERY loud for some reason, as it was back in the same arena at the Wrestling Classic) but the referee goes down. With the distraction, Volkoff's manager Freddie Blassie throws in his cane, only to have Kirchner intercept it and knock Volkoff out for the pin at 1:35.

Gene Okerlund does the ring introductions for the battle royal. This match has its own celebrities with Clara Peller (starred in Wendy's ads) as timekeeper and Chicago Bears legend Dick Butkus and Dallas Cowboy Too Tall Jones as guest referees.

Battle Royal

WWF: Pedro Morales, Tony Atlas, Ted Arcidi, Dan Spivey, Hillbilly Jim, King Tonga, Iron Sheik, B. Brian Blair, Jim Brunzell, John Studd, Bret Hart, Jim Neidhart, Bruno Sammartino, Andre the Giant

NFL: Jimbo Covert, Harvey Martin, Ernie Holmes, Bill Fralic, Russ Francis, William Perry

I'm not going to bother listing off who most of these wrestlers are because most of them aren't going to mean a thing here. As you can see, the NFL players are a bit outnumbered. Ernie Ladd, former football star and future WWE Hall of Famer, joins commentary in a smart move. It's a wild brawl to start as is often the case in a battle royal. Covert saves Perry from elimination but is put out along with King Tonga a few seconds later.

Francis thinks it's a good idea to go after Andre and only barely slides back in from the apron. Bruno dumps Holmes out and it's Andre vs. Studd to a nice reaction. Someone eliminates Brunzell and the ring is starting to clean out a bit. Perry tosses Atlas to a BIG pop and then goes to fight with Studd. Morales and Martin go out at the same time and nearly get in a fight at ringside.

Arcidi is put out and Spivey is gone a few seconds later. There go Hillbilly Jim and Blair, followed by Fralic a few seconds later. Sammartino throws out the Sheik and we're down to Andre, Francis, Studd,

Sammartino, Hart, Neidhart and Perry. Things can finally slow down after several minutes of just random eliminations. Studd tosses Bruno and actually puts Andre down in the corner.

Perry EXPLODES at the Hart Foundation and knocks them out to the apron. The fans are all excited but Perry charges into Studd's elbow and gets hiptossed out. Perry offers a handshake but suckers Studd in by pulling him out to the floor to get the people going all over again. Francis tries to fight the Harts by himself but eats a headbutt from Andre. A double dropkick ties Andre up in the ropes and Francis is easily tossed out.

So it's Andre, Neidhart and Hart and I don't see this going well for the normal sized guys. Andre kicks both of them out of the corner, grabs Neidhart by the beard, kicks him in the face and puts him out. Bret tries to come in off the top and gets tossed out with ease to give Andre the win at 9:03.

Rating: D+. Not much to see here and they made no secret of the fact that Andre was the obvious winner. The football players were really just a novelty so you could have a battle royal without looking like it was an easy way to get people on the card. They kept this short and to the point which helps things out quite a bit. Perry got the crowd going and Andre winning was the right call so no one is hurt here.

Back in New York, Piper says Mr. T. and William Perry are both cheaters. Piper denies cheating by shoving the referee.

Covert says he got cheated when someone jumped him from behind.

Iron Sheik says he proved wrestling is tougher than football.

We recap the end of the battle royal.

Tag Team Titles: British Bulldogs vs. Dream Team

The Dream Team is Brutus Beefcake/Greg Valentine and are defending. The Bulldogs are Davey Boy Smith (also known as the British Bulldog) and Dynamite Kid, who are managed by Lou Albano and have Ozzy Osbourne in their corner for no apparent reason. Even Gorilla doesn't seem to know

why he's out there. Smith and Valentine start things off with Davey cranking on the arm.

It's quickly off to Dynamite as things speed up, including a big shoulder to knock Valentine into the corner. Greg comes back with a suplex but Smith comes in to scare Valentine out to the floor. Back in and Valentine gets in a headbutt to the ribs and tags out to Beefcake for the first time. Beefcake is quickly press slammed and it's back to Dynamite for a hard clothesline.

Brutus finally drags Davey off to the corner and makes the tag off to Greg, who comes in off the top with a forearm to the back. That's some good heel tag team work and it's as successful as always. Dynamite comes in anyway though and it's time for some hard forearms and shoulders in the corner. A backbreaker gets two on Valentine with Brutus having to make the save. It's not often that you see a tag match stay even this long but this was before the Rock and Roll Express vs. Midnight Express had created the classic tag team formula.

Valentine comes back with a piledriver (where he picked him up for a traditional version but kneeled forward like a tombstone) for two but he crotches himself on the Kid's knees. Everything breaks down and the powerslam plants Valentine for two. Davey misses a charge into the post though and the champs start in on the arm.

A hammerlock slam and a top rope elbow onto the shoulder have Davey in even more trouble and Valentine gets two off a shoulder breaker. For some reason he pulls Smith up at two and Okerlund thinks it's going to come back and haunt him. As he says this, Dynamite gets on the middle rope and sticks his head out. Smith rams Valentine head first into the Kid's head, knocking Dynamite down onto the floor but knocking Greg out cold for the pin and the titles at 12:03.

Rating: B. Match of the night by far here with Dynamite taking one heck of a bump to end the match. The Bulldogs were a great team and they definitely deserved the titles and they did it in a tag match that went completely against the common tag team formula. Unfortunately it felt like it was much more about a way to get Osbourne on screen, which is

only going to get worse.

Albano and Osbourne celebrate as the Bulldogs remember what planet they're on. Kid can't talk or stand as he's still recovering from having being knocked off the middle rope and down onto the floor with no one to catch him. That's a scary bump and it's no shock that his body gave out on him so soon after this.

Vince and Susan talk about the title change and preview the main event.

The Los Angeles announcers (Jesse Ventura, Elvira, Lord Alfred Hayes) preview their section of the card.

Hercules Hernandez vs. Ricky Steamboat

Hernandez is better known simply as Hercules and is a big power guy as you would expect. Hercules jumps him from behind to start but Ricky comes back with a big chop. It's time for the armdrags from Steamboat and he cranks on an armbars as is so often his custom. Back up and an elbow to the jaw drops Hercules and it's off to the arm again. Hercules finally realizes that his name is Hercules and clotheslines Ricky's head off before driving some hard knees into the side of his head.

There's a Stun Gun for no cover as Elvira is proving to be the most worthless commentator of all time as she just babbles about how she's never seen anything like this before. Hercules returns the back elbow to the jaw and gorilla presses Ricky twice in a row. Ricky raises his knees to stop a top rope splash (way out of character for Hercules) and finishes with the high cross body at 7:34.

Rating: D+. This was a standard power vs. speed match which could have been worse but still wasn't anything worth seeing. Hernandez was a one dimensional wrestler which made him a good foil for someone like Steamboat who could mix up his offense enough to figure out a way around the power. It's a fine match but really nothing out of the ordinary.

Uncle Elmer vs. Adrian Adonis

Adonis is a flamboyant guy in a pink dress and make-up while Elmer is a 400+lb hillbilly. They're not exactly going with the high brow ideas

here. Elmer attacks to start and sends Adrian to the floor with a single forearm. Adrian rips the ring skirt off and manager Jimmy Hart is beside himself. Elmer pulls Adonis to the apron and starts ripping off the dress. You knew they were going here eventually. A big punch to Elmer's chest puts him down and Adonis takes off the dress to reveal regular trunks. Elmer comes back with a corner splash but he misses a legdrop, allowing Adonis to drop a top rope headbutt/splash for the pin at 3:04.

Rating: F. This is the kind of stuff I can't stand in wrestling. Adonis and Elmer are two of the most basic, stereotypical characters they could have put together and it looks stupid. This catered to the lowest common denominator and that's never the kind of wrestling you want to have. It doesn't help that the match was awful.

Adonis puts a bow on Elmer's back.

Hogan is ready to step inside a cage with King Kong Bundy after Bundy damaged his ribs a few months ago. All Hogan wants is for Bobby Heenan to try to get involved.

Funk Brothers vs. Junkyard Dog/Tito Santana

The Funks are Terry/Hoss (better known as Dory Jr.) and they're managed by Jimmy Hart. Dog and Hoss get things going but Terry is quickly dragged inside so Dog can slam both brothers. Things settle down to Tito vs. Terry but both Funks are quickly dropkicked out to the floor. Back in again and it's Dog ramming Terry's face into the buckle several times as this has been one sided so far. It's off to Dory vs. Tito with the Funks finally taking over but Tito comes back with the flying forearm for two.

Terry sends him out to the floor for some stomps from Hart and Elvira rants about how Hart needs to be ejected, sounding like someone who has never watched wrestling in her life. Back in and Tito reverses a suplex into one of his own as Elvira wants some trunks ripped off. Terry misses a legdrop and it's off to the Dog for more headbutts. House is cleaned and Terry gets backdropped over the top. Dog slams him onto a table and busts up Terry's leg. Everything breaks down and Terry blasts Dog in the head with the megaphone for the pin at 11:43.

Rating: B-. Fun match here with the Funks working very well together against the always entertaining Tito and the always charismatic Dog. It seemed that they were setting the Funks up as a potential challenge to the Bulldogs but they wouldn't be around long. This was a nice tag match though and one of the best things on the card.

The announcers have an awkward chat as the cage is assembled.

To fill in some more time, we see King Kong Bundy attacking Hogan on a Saturday Night's Main Event and injuring the champ's ribs to set this up. It's really not much of a storyline and it was only set up about a month in advance. With the talent they had on the roster (Savage, Roberts and Piper), this really is a questionable opponent for Hogan.

The doctor has recommended that Hogan doesn't wrestle. As his ribs are being taped, Hogan puts a 100lb dumbbell around his neck and does chin-ups.

Bobby Heenan talks about how important a day this is for him because he's going to get to pack the World Title in Bundy's suitcase tonight. Bundy promises to send Hogan to the hospital all over again.

In New York, Susan St. James picks Hogan.

Time for the celebrities. Los Angeles Dodgers manager Tommy Lasorda is guest ring announcer, actor Ricky Schroder is timekeeper and Robert Conrad is outside referee, meaning he won't be doing much of anything.

WWF World Title: Hulk Hogan vs. King Kong Bundy

Hogan is defending inside a cage (the big blue one in one of its earliest, if not the earliest, appearances) of course. Big pop for the champ as you would expect. They slug it out to start with Hogan knocking him into the ropes and nailing the big boot early on. This has already gone on longer than Bundy's match last year. Hogan fires off a forearm in the corner which I don't think I've ever seen him use before.

Bundy can't ram him into the cage so he FINALLY goes after the taped up ribs. He slams Hogan to the mat and steps on his head as we go to an overhead shot. Hulk has to dive across the ring to keep Bundy from

getting out so Bundy rams him back first into the cage. There goes the tape and Elvira is happy about more clothes coming off. Bundy chokes with the tape. Elvira: "He can't do that can he?" Ventura is clearly getting annoyed at having to explain basic concepts like "there are no rules" to her over and over.

Hogan comes back with more right hands and sends Bundy face first into the cage to bust him open. Bundy gets choked on the ropes but Hogan, ever the moron, falls backwards trying a slam. That's still not enough though as Hogan chokes with the tape, only to eat the big splashes that busted up the ribs in the first place.

We get the Hogan "fish out of the water" shaking but he still gets over to save the title again. Hogan gets all fired up again and powerslams Bundy (that's very rare as it's almost always a regular slam) before kicking him out of the corner. Heenan's save fails miserable and Hogan climbs down (Elvira: "All right he's gonna win!") to retain at 10:18.

Rating: D+. It's not a good match and Elvira made it insufferable but Hogan vs. a monster in the 80s is as much of a layup as you're going to find in these early years. Bundy might have been considered a bigger threat back in the day but this felt like any given house show loop and a match that these two probably had a few dozen times around the country.

Hogan beats up Heenan and poses to end the show as Vince wraps it up from New York.

Overall Rating: D. There's no way around it: this is one of the worst Wrestlemanias of all time. That being said, I always give this one a bit of a pass as they had no idea what they had with Wrestlemania or even pay per view in general. This felt like a bunch of house shows clipped down and edited together into one big one and that's not the most interesting thing in the world. Hogan vs. Bundy is a very run of the mill main event but some of the tag matches are entertaining enough. The match is far more dull and lame than bad, but that doesn't make it something fun to watch.

Ratings Comparison

Paul Orndorff vs. Don Muraco

Original: D+

2013 Redo: D

2015 Redo: D

George Steele vs. Randy Savage

Original: C-

2013 Redo: C-

2015 Redo: D-

Jake Roberts vs. George Wells

Original: F

2013 Redo: D+

2015 Redo: D+

Roddy Piper vs. Mr. T.

Original: F

2013 Redo: D

2015 Redo: D+

Velvet McIntyre vs. Fabulous Moolah

Original: N/A

2013 Redo: N/A

2015 Redo: N/A

Corporal Kirschner vs. Nikolai Volkoff

Original: D-

2013 Redo: N/A

2015 Redo: N/A

Battle Royal

Original: B

2013 Redo: D

2015 Redo: D+

British Bulldog vs. Dream Team

Original: B

2013 Redo: B-

2015 Redo: B

Rick Steamboat vs. Hercules Hernandez

Original: C-

2013 Redo: C-

2015 Redo: D+

Uncle Elmer vs. Adrian Adonis

Original: N/A

2013 Redo: D-

2015 Redo: F

Tito Santana/Junkyard Dog vs. Terry Funk/Hoss Funk

Original: B-

2013 Redo: B-

2015 Redo: B-

Hulk Hogan vs. King Kong Bundy

Original: B-

2013 Redo: D

2015 Redo: D+

Overall Rating

Original: D+

2013 Redo: D

2015 Redo: D

Wrestlemania II is...weird. Like, really weird.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/09/history-of-wrestlemania-with-kb-wrestlemania-2-what-the-hell-were-they-thinking/>

And the 2013 Redo:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2013/03/11/wrestlemania-count-up-wrestlemania-ii-three-times-the-suck/>

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