

# Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XIII (2015 Redo): Austin Is Here

## Wrestlemania XIII

Date: March 23, 1997

Location: Rosemont Horizon, Rosemont, Illinois

Attendance: 18,197

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler, Vince McMahon

The advertised main event this year is the Undertaker challenging Sid for the WWF World Title. This isn't the biggest match in the world but then again this isn't the biggest Wrestlemania in the world. That's the underlying problem with this show: it feels like any other show instead of the biggest night of the year. This was a strange period where Wrestlemania wasn't being treated as the company's grand showcase but that would change soon enough. Let's get to it.

### Free For All: Billy Gunn vs. Flash Funk

Funk is better known as 2 Cold Scorpio and is a very skilled high flier. Billy is on his own now and isn't all that interesting as a solo cowboy. Gunn starts fast but Funk flips out of a backdrop and scores with a superkick. A bad looking belly to back superplex drops Funk again and a clothesline gets a very sloppy two.

The announcers ignore the match to talk about Austin vs. Hart and we hit the chinlock. That goes nowhere so Gunn misses a top rope legdrop, allowing Funk to hit a spinwheel kick for two. Funk gets the same off a top rope victory roll but his moonsault hits knees. Billy comes back with a tornado DDT for the pin at 7:05.

**Rating:** D+. This just wasn't very good. Gunn was such a lame character on his own and it would only get worse soon after this as he would become Rockabilly for several months. Funk was at least entertaining with his high flying even though his career in the WWF never went anywhere. Boring

match.

The opening video focuses on the history of Wrestlemania but this isn't quite the same thing. That's very true as this one wasn't even a sellout. We hear about the spirit of rebellion in the air and Austin vs. Bret is discussed after the main event.

### Godwinns vs. New Blackjacks vs. Doug Furnas/Phillip LaFon vs. Headbangers

This is a four team elimination match with the winners getting a Tag Team Title shot the next night on Monday Night Raw. The Blackjacks are Bradshaw and Barry Windham, Furnas and LaFon are a Canadian team who aren't the most interesting guys in the world and the Headbangers are...different. They wear skirts and slam into each other in what is considered dancing. Before the match the Blackjacks say they're riding again (the original team hadn't been around for about twenty years. Of note, Windham is the son of Blackjack Mulligan and Bradshaw is the nephew of Blackjack Lanza) in a quick interview.

It's a huge brawl to start as you would expect until it's Henry vs. Bradshaw. The Godwinns get the better of it but Thrasher is quickly in, only to get planted with a pumphandle slam. Phineas comes in to beat on Thrasher even more before he tags out to Mosh, giving us Headbanger vs. Headbanger.

That goes nowhere so it's off to Windham vs. Furnas (an incredible powerhouse) with the latter pulling off a hurricanrana, only to get caught in a powerslam for no cover. Bradshaw comes in and falls to the floor with Furnas but Bradshaw shoves the referee down for the DQ and an elimination. Furnas and LaFon are counted out as well, meaning it's down to the Godwinns vs. the Headbangers.

Phineas works over throws Thrasher around and gets two off a delayed vertical suplex. It's back to Henry who is sent into the buckle, followed by an awkward exchange where Thrasher seemed to forget to raise his boot in the corner. Phineas comes in to spit in Thrasher's face (which Vince says Phineas does to farm animals, much to Lawler's confusion) but it's quickly off to Mosh vs. Henry with the big man scoring with a Cactus Clothesline.

Mosh dives off the apron to take Henry down and this just keeps going. Commenting on the Headbangers' attire, Lawler asks if Vince has any White Zombie CDs. Vince: "White.....Zombie?" Back in and Thrasher misses a moonsault, allowing the tag to Phineas for some house cleaning. Thrasher breaks up the Slop Drop and Mosh hits the Stage Dive (top rope seated senton) for the pin and the title shot at 10:39.

**Rating:** D. The wrestling was sloppy, the teams had no issues coming in and the double elimination felt really cheap. This was one of the worst possible ideas for an opening match as it started bad and never got any better. Just not a very good match as it went longer than it needed to and didn't change the fact that this division is still lacking.

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Brian Pillman and Sunny tell us to CALL THE HOTLINE!

Intercontinental Title: The Sultan vs. Rocky Maivia

Honky Tonk Man is out on commentary in his quest for a new protege. Rocky is defending (after beating Hunter Hearst Helmsley to win the title a little over a month ago in a big upset) and Sultan is just a Middle Eastern monster played by the future Rikishi and managed by Bob Backlund and the Iron Sheik. Rocky starts fast with some right hands and a dropkick to send Sultan out to the floor.

Sultan throws him into the post to take over as the crowd is noticeably not interested. Back in and a hard clothesline gets two on the champ and we're in the nerve hold. Oh sweet goodness not this again. Honky Tonk says he'd have already won with the Shake Rattle and Roll and be in the back combing his hair. Sultan's top rope headbutt gets two and it's time for a chinlock.

The fans are rightfully bored and restless as this hold continues. Rocky makes his comeback with some open handed punches and a belly to belly for two as the fans still don't seem interested. The high cross body (Rocky's finisher) connects but Sheik has the referee. A great looking superkick (he always had a good one) takes the champ down and a piledriver gets two. Rocky comes right back with a rollup for the pin to retain at 9:43.

**Rating:** D-. This one was less bad and much more dull with the chinlock in the middle killing anything they could have gotten out of it. Rocky would of course get way better but he didn't have a character or anywhere near the charisma that he would have in the future. That leaves you with a dull match against a one note challenger which isn't something you want to do after a lame opener.

Post match Sultan, Sheik and Backlund destroy Rocky but his dad Rocky Johnson comes in for the save and house is cleaned.

Ken Shamrock, the former UFC Champion and the guest referee for the submission match, promises to not be intimidated.

Dok Hendrix (better known as Michael P.S. Hayes and with a very loud echo for some reason) asks Helmsley about his relationship with newcomer Chyna. Helmsley says Hendrix doesn't need to know about it and tonight he's taking Goldust out straight up. Marlena better be watching out too.

#### Hunter Hearst Helmsley vs. Goldust

Helmsley has taken a major step up in the last year as he's a lot more serious though still far away from what he would become. This started a few months ago when Helmsley made a pass at Marlena. Goldust went after Helmsley but Chyna debuted and attacked Marlena to continue the feud. Goldust is now good but still a bit out there as he crouches down and stares at Hunter before exploding with right hands. He makes sure to spit down at Chyna who as usual doesn't flinch.

Helmsley gets clotheslined out to the floor as Lawler accuses Vince of wearing a toupee. More right hands are followed by a ram into the post and this is one sided so far. Hunter's facebuster only gives him a temporary reprieve as Goldust scores with a nice powerslam. With all the momentum, Goldust goes up top but gets thrown down onto the floor in a huge crash to completely change momentum. Things slow way down as they should when the villain is in control and Goldust's clothes are partially removed for the second year in a row.

Hunter puts on an abdominal stretch to slow things down even more as Marlena puffs on a cigar. Off to a chinlock with Helmsley's arm not

actually making contact with Goldust's throat. A suplex gets two on Goldust and a DDT gets the same. Back up and Goldust's comeback is stopped as they ram heads to make the match drag again. Goldust loads up the Curtain Call (reverse suplex slam) but Chyna goes after Marlena, allowing the Pedigree to put Goldust away at 13:17.

**Rating:** D+. I've never liked this match or feud but I guess it's an improvement as they had a longer and worse match at the Royal Rumble. These two fought each other for the first half of 1997 and it never took off. Helmsley just wasn't entertaining at this point as he had such a slow paced offense and Goldust wasn't really the kind of person who was going to be able to help him to a new level here. It's not a horrible match but it's really boring, especially after an awful first hour.

Marc Mero and Sable pitch Wrestlemania shirts. Well ok it's mainly Sable but Mero is there too.

Shawn Michaels can't figure out AOL.

Tag Team Titles: Mankind/Vader vs. Owen Hart/British Bulldog

All villains here. Hart and Bulldog are defending and Mankind and Vader have Paul Bearer in their corner after Bearer turned on Undertaker at Summerslam 1996. The champs have been having issues for months and Owen recently said he was smarter than Bulldog, who is also European Champion, having beaten Owen in a tournament final to become the inaugural champion.

Vader powers Owen into the corner to start and pummels him with right hands. A splash misses but Owen tries a hurricanrana and is easily powerbombed down. Heaven help this team if he's the smarter one. Everything breaks down and Bulldog throws the challenger around before staying in to headbutt Mankind. Bulldog suplexes both of them in an awesome power display (he was always great at those) and we hit the chinlock on Mankind.

They head outside with Vader nailing Bulldog in the back of the head with the urn to take over. Now it's Vader's turn for a middle rope splash, followed by a running knee to the head from Mankind. Vader dives into a

powerslam (a very common spot for him) and the tag brings in Owen, who the fans don't cheer because he's a heel. Hart avoids a sitdown splash and cross bodies Vader, only to run into a heavy clothesline to give the challengers control again. Owen gets beaten down in front of his parents in the front row and Lawler has a ball with his jokes.

Mankind blocks a splash with his knees as the announcers discuss the history of the WWF in this building, including a Wrestling Classic reference. A nice spinwheel kick puts Vader down to no response but he breaks up Owen's tag attempt. Mankind follows Owen to the floor but charges into a belly to belly. The hot tag finally brings in Bulldog to clean house, even knocking Vader's mask off. The powerslam is countered by the Mandible Claw though and they fall outside for the double countout at 16:04.

**Rating:** C-. That's the best match of the night by far and it's really more long than good. Mankind and Vader probably should have taken the titles here, even if it was just for a quick title reign before Owen and Bulldog got them back. They had held the titles for months now and it was time to freshen the division up a bit.

Mankind won't let go of the hold for a bit but the challengers eventually leave, far too happy about a double countout draw.

We get a long recap of Hart vs. Austin. This is all about Austin having no respect for anything Bret Hart has done in the WWF and letting his venom flow through the company. Austin has been winning the mental game too as Bret has started completely snapping, going on hateful tirades about how everyone has screwed him over and how it's everyone else that has changed. Bret's entire legacy rides on him being able to defeat Steve Austin and regain the fans' respect in this one match.

This is one of the greatest stories ever told in wrestling as the details (costing Bret the title, the Royal Rumble etc) are all secondary to the underlying theme: Bret being unable to hold on to the past and not accepting this new reality. Austin embodied the rebellious nature and it made for a perfect dynamic with the traditionalist Bret. As great as the stories were, the matches were even better and made the feud one of the

best ever.

### Steve Austin vs. Bret Hart

Submission match with Ken Shamrock refereeing. Austin has a famous entrance as a wall of glass saying AUSTIN 3:16 breaks and he walks through the broken pieces. The fans are split here but it seems to be more pro-Bret coming in. They slug it out to start and are on the floor very quickly. Austin is sent face first into the post but he crotches Bret across the barricade and clotheslines him into the crowd.

Bret gets whipped into some hockey boards but he fights back and they head deeper into the fans. A backdrop gets Bret out of a piledriver as you can barely see anything at the moment. Back to ringside with Bret in control and the fans completely into something for the first time all night. Austin reverses a whip to send Bret into the steps but Hart grabs a swinging neckbreaker to get a breather back inside.

Vince is already treating Bret like the heel on commentary, wondering what kind of excuse Bret will have if he loses. It's time to work on Austin's eternally damaged knee with a leg snap and some cannonballs off the ropes. He misses another cannonball though and Austin grabs the Stunner out of nowhere. No covers though so Bret gets up and kicks the knee out again.

The Figure Four around the post has Austin screaming but he doesn't give up. Lawler: "Bret can twist that leg until it looks like the Chicago White Sox's Robin Ventura but Austin won't submit." Bret grabs a chair but can't Pillmanize the leg, allowing Austin to get in a great chair shot to knock Hart off the top. The fans are losing it for Austin here and you can see the future right in front of your eyes.

Austin's middle rope elbow, complete with two middle fingers, has Bret in even more trouble. JR is on fire here as he talks about how this is all about respect and emotion instead of covering a bald spot (shot at Hogan) or your reputation. Unfortunately Vince is there to bring it back down to dull, unemotional commentary that sounds like a high school chemistry teacher trying to be funny.

Austin goes for a submission by laying on his back, wrapping his leg around Bret's head and pulling back on his arm (it's hard to put into words) before going for a standard Boston crab, only to have Hart make it to the ropes. Austin can't get a Sharpshooter on Bret (Lawler: "Wouldn't that be great? Seeing Bret submit to the Sharpshooter?" Vince: "Hey, it could happen.") so he sends him outside instead. A hard whip sends Austin into the barricade, wiping out a bunch of commentators and busting him open.

Bret sends him into other metal objects and sweet goodness Austin is spewing blood. Hart pounds away on the cut and it's time for the Five Moves of Doom. That's enough wrestling though and Bret starts driving the chair into Austin's bad knee. JR again goes into his full on excitement mode before Bret hammers away in the corner. Austin isn't interested in wrestling either and kicks Bret low. The fans are right back into this and Austin is fired up. He stomps one heck of a mudhole in the corner, flips Bret off, and stomps him again.

A nice superplex plants Bret again and Austin chokes him with an electrical cord, only to have Bret grab the bell to knock Austin out. That's a very nice callback to Wrestlemania VIII where Piper wouldn't give into the demons but Bret easily did. The Sharpshooter goes on and the blood is flowing out of Austin's head in one of the most famous shots in wrestling (As Austin would later say on his podcast: "That's an image that sold a lot of t-shirts."). A loud Austin chant starts up and he powers out of the hold as the blood drips down between his teeth but Bret gets it back on and Austin passes out to end the match at 22:03.

**Rating:** A+. Good grief this match is amazing. This is the match that turned Austin into the biggest star of all time and the moment where the WWF had the Monday Night Wars won. It would take time, but Austin was clearly going to be the hottest thing ever and there was nothing anyone could do to stop it.

That's the key to the whole match and a great piece of symbolism: Bret could not stop Austin and only slowed him down. No matter what Bret did, he couldn't make Austin quit, even after he gave in to the dark side. This is on the short list for the greatest match of all time and



certainly one of the best Wrestlemania matches ever. In case you somehow haven't seen this, go out of your way to watch it at some point because it's one of the best and most important matches of all time.

Bret is still livid and stomps away even more until Shamrock (who wasn't a factor in the match) breaks it up and offers to fight. Hart leaves and is booed out of the building as Austin has pulled himself to the corner. Austin pulls his way up and Stuns the referee for trying to help him. He very slowly limps to the back with no help, receiving thunderous cheers from the crowd. A star has been born and everyone knows it. Even the announcers put him over as the toughest man they've ever seen.

The Nation of Domination (Faarooq, Savio Vega and Crush plus an army of unnamed men, many of whom were actors there to make the Nation look even bigger. That's actually a very smart idea and not something I've seen since.) promises that it's going to be a fight against the Legion of Doom and Ahmed Johnson. Ahmed had feuded with the Nation for months now and this is one of their many showdowns.

#### Nation of Domination vs. Legion of Doom/Ahmed Johnson

This is a Chicago Street Fight and the Nation has brought out a bunch of weapons to use. Ahmed has a 2x4 and Hawk brings a kitchen sink for the sake of completeness. The LOD seems even more fired up than usual to be in their hometown. It's a brawl to start of course and thankfully there are no tags required here. The good guys clean house to start and the yet to be named D'Lo Brown, JC Ice and Wolfie D. (the rappers who perform the Nation's theme song) are slammed down to the floor.

Ahmed dives over the barricade to take Crush out as this is rapidly turning into a match that is impossible to call. Hawk swings a 2x4 at Savio but hits the ropes, sending the board into the air, only to have Hawk make a nice catch to send Savio running again. Animal tries to piledrive Faarooq through the French announcers' table but they fall to the side instead. Instead Animal sprays him with a fire extinguisher and things slow down a bit until Ahmed slams Faarooq through the French table.

Animal beats the fire out of Savio with a trashcan but the fire

extinguisher goes off again to blind everyone. The Nation puts a noose around Ahmed's throat to hang him over the ropes but Hawk comes back with a double clothesline. Faarooq tries to choke Hawk with the noose until he gets pulled off the top rope for a big crash. The brawling continues until Crush gets caught in a quick Doomsday Device, followed by a 2x4 shot to give Animal the pin at 10:43.

**Rating:** B. It's the definition of a garbage brawl but these guys beat the fire out of each other the entire time and gave us one heck of an entertaining brawl, especially in the death slot after the submission match. This was really fun and that's all it needed to be with the fans going nuts over seeing the LOD dominant and violent one more time.

JC Ice and Wolfie D. take a double Doomsday Device after the match.

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There's no recap for the main event but there isn't much of a story to tell. Sid took the title from Bret when Austin interfered and Undertaker has been in the title hunt for a long time now. This was originally going to be Bret taking the title from Shawn to get his win back from last year but Shawn lost his smile just in time for the match to not take place. That's very convenient no?

Shawn Michaels comes out for commentary, taking his sweet time to soak in all the cheers.

Sid says he isn't scared of the darkness.

WWF World Title: Sycho Sid vs. Undertaker

Sid is defending and gets the very cool name in lights fireworks display. The bell rings and here's Bret Hart (Shawn: "Imagine that: Bret being resentful about not being in the main event.") to insult Shawn for faking an injury, tell Undertaker that they're no longer friends, and tell Sid that he's a fraud as champion. Sid just smiles and powerbombs Bret before telling the crybaby to hop along. There's a second bell and we're ready to go.

Undertaker pounds away to start and hits an early Old School, only to get

caught in a bearhug. The hold stays on for nearly two minutes as Lawler and Michaels bicker for a bit. Shawn asks if you can actually squeeze the life out of Undertaker. Sid boots Undertaker in the face and kicks him over the announcers' table as this is dragging along.

A slam turns the table over but Undertaker is right back to his feet and they go inside with Vince mentioning that this was turned into a No DQ match earlier today. Not that it really matters but that's three straight No DQ matches to end the show. Sid pulls back on a camel clutch as Shawn gets in a perfect analysis by saying Sid doesn't deviate from the power because it takes him everywhere he needs to go. That's such a perfect lesson that so many people don't understand.

Sid gets two off a powerslam and the frustration is setting in. Shawn: "Better pound on him some more." They go outside again with Sid being knocked over the barricade so Undertaker can punch him in the face. Back in and we hit a bad chinlock (read as Undertaker is laying on his back with Sid's hands on his face) until Undertaker fights up with a powerslam for two.

Now it's Undertaker with a nerve hold as the crowd is getting restless again. Back up and it's a double big boot to put both of them down. A middle rope clothesline (more like a fist) gets two for the champ but Undertaker punches him out of the air on the next attempt. Now it's Undertaker going up top for a clothesline for two of his own. Sid reverses the Tombstone into one of his own but even the arm fold cover gets two.

They go outside for the third time and here's Bret again to blast Sid in the back with a chair. Back in and a chokeslam gets two for Undertaker but he misses a running clothesline. Sid sets for the powerbomb until Bret comes down AGAIN (Shawn: "Doesn't he get tired of getting beat up?") and snaps Sid across the top rope, setting up the Tombstone to give Undertake the title at 23:54.

**Rating:** D-. WAY too long here and the match was a disaster most of the time. Sid isn't made to go this long and it made for one heck of a bad match. The Bret stuff got annoying in a hurry but at least he was more

interesting than either guy out there. Undertaker winning is definitely the right call as Sid was pretty much gone after this and Undertaker could at least do some entertaining things with the right opponent. That's not the case here though and the match was a disaster.

Undertaker poses to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** D. Yeah this was bad. There's a really good stretch of about forty five minutes in there that was on fire but this isn't a forty five minute show. So much of this was spent on matches that didn't feel important or didn't give me a reason to care. What changed here other than the World Title? Rocky retains in a lame match, the Tag Team Titles go to a double countout and we need to watch tomorrow to find out what happens with the Headbangers?

Much like Wrestlemania IX, this didn't feel like a Wrestlemania. If this was any other show during the year, the results would have been much better. Unfortunately, as has been the case multiple times, this was the biggest show of the year and the card didn't live up to the standard. This isn't a good show but that's a very common problem around this time, which is why business was in such a bad place here.

### Ratings Comparison

Headbangers vs. Godwinns vs. Doug Furnas/Phillip LaFaon vs. New Blackjacks

Original: D+

2013 Redo: C

2015 Redo: D

Rocky Maivia vs. The Sultan

Original: D

2013 Redo: D+

2015 Redo: D-

Hunter Hearst Helmsley vs. Goldust

Original: D

2013 Redo: C-

2015 Redo: D+

Owen Hart/British Bulldog vs. Vader/Mankind

Original: D+

2013 Redo: B-

2015 Redo: C-

Bret Hart vs. Steve Austin

Original: A+

2013 Redo: A+

2015 Redo: A+

Legion of Doom/Ahmed Johnson vs. Nation of Domination

Original: B+

2013 Redo: B-

2015 Redo: B

Undertaker vs. Sycho Sid

Original: D

2013 Redo: D

2015 Redo: D-

Overall Rating

Original: D

2013 Redo: D+

2015 Redo: D

The street fight is good but it's not THAT good.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/20/history-of-wrestlemania-with-kb-wrestlemania-13-hitman-and-austin-thats-it/>

And the 2013 Redo:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2013/03/22/wrestlemania-count-up-wrestlemania-xiii-austins-ascension/>

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