

Summerslam Count-Up – 1988 (Original): Powers Up

Summerslam 1988

Date: August 29, 1988

Location: Madison Square Garden, New York City, New York

Attendance: 20,000

Commentators: Gorilla Monsoon, Billy Graham

The first show. This show was completely capitalizing on WM 4's tournament with Savage being the victor. Now I've heard two separate versions of what the initial main event for this show was supposed to be.

I've heard that the original plan for the tournament was to have DiBiase's master plan (see the WM history thread for details) to have worked and have DiBiase win the belt over Hogan, leading to Savage challenging him here for it and then we get a 6 month Mega Powers angle, or the same one minus Savage holding the belt which I think would have made more sense given some of Hogan's promos leading up to Mania 5.

The other version that I've heard, and the one I give less credit to, was that the plan was to have Flair come in for a feud with Savage leading to a title vs. title match at Summerslam with Savage, ending in either a draw or Flair winning both titles briefly.

I consider this nonsense because according to EVERY other source I've heard and based solely on everything that's been on WWF television during this time period, to say Savage vs. Hogan was locked into Mania 5 is almost like saying Vince has a bit of influence on the way the product is presented. As for the rest of the announced card, there really isn't one.

I mean literally, there was nothing else announced for the show and the box art on the VHS is Savage/Hogan and

DiBiase/Andre, which is the main event, billed as the Mega Powers vs. the Mega Bucks. I'm not putting a lot of faith into the show, but let's see if it lives up to its 80s awesomeness.

Intro is as painfully bland as any wrestling intro is in the 80s, with the WWF logo flying over water for no particular reason before we get a shot of New York City with Gorilla commentating about the show, saying nothing that you wouldn't expect him to say. Of course Madison SQUARE Garden is the roundest building you'll ever see. We get a more standard intro with the four guys in the main event along with Liz and Virgil and Ventura, who is the referee tonight.

This is more like it with the kick sweet WWF 80s song in the background. After that we hear our commentators, with Monsoon sounding so completely unexcited about this show that it's pathetic. Now granted it was a new idea at the time and no one really had a clue if it was going to work or not, but at least try to sound excited please? Graham calls Hogan his hero which makes me laugh as Hogan stole half of Graham's stuff to make himself the legend he is today.

The crowd is counting down something in the background which I'm guessing is the start of the PPV feed. We go straight from this to the first match, as the heels have no music.

Rougeau Brothers vs. British Bulldogs

Oh yeah now this is what I'm talking about. Clearly I'm talking about it because I'm writing about it as you know because you're reading this since I guess there's nothing good on TV. I have to turn off the IC Title DVD for this and I'm on the Shawn/Razor ladder match so I really must love you guys. Apparently the French guys are about to move to the US which gets boos from the crowd which I can't quite get.

BIG pop for the Bulldogs who I think are about done at this point. Matilda clears the ring. The French dudes are heels that try to convince everyone they're faces but still cheat in

their matches. They would also hug each other WAY too much, and on the infamous occasion, one rubbed a Bushwacker's balls. Very nice old school tag team match going on here with speed and power for the Brits against speed and cheating from your heels.

This is very solid stuff here and these guys are just beating the tar out of each other using some old school tactics. You get not one but two great beatdowns of one face before the hot tag, leading to the second which just makes this even better. During one of the beatdowns, this one being the one on Dynamite, he's put into an abdominal stretch and Gorilla starts to complain about it.

For the love of all things good and holy, SHUT UP ABOUT THE FOOT. I have seen a lot of Monsoon matches and he has complained about the stupid foot being hooked in an abdominal stretch so many times that I want to hurt someone. Let it go ahead. It's a freaking rest hold that never wins anything at all. Although, maybe if they hooked the foot they would win with it...Oh screw now I'm all confused.

Anyway, in the end the faces just start beating the heck out of the heels but they never quite can put them away. That makes both teams look equally strong as one team gets to show off their offensive skills and the other gets to show how resilient they are. That's a very nice touch that you don't see much anymore. Eventually both teams hit their finishers but only the faces kick out of them.

They don't win though as just after Dynamite hits the headbutt, the time limit is up and we're done. The Bulldogs chase the heels down with Graham saying that's the right thing to do and to finish it in the shower if they have to. Does that sound like the tag line of a porn to anyone else or is that just me?

Rating: B. This was a great way to open things up for both the

show and the series, but the lack of a real finish hurts it. Both teams looked good here as neither really dominated either part of the match. Both teams were playing to their characteristics very well and all four men looked good. One thing though: I have never seen a match with so many freaking monkey flips. Literally, I saw at least 5 of them and attempts at two or three more. Why so many I wonder?

We see how Ron Bass injured Brutus Beefcake in one of the funniest things I've ever seen. The idea is that he choked Brutus out and cut him open with a spur. Since we can't handle a single cut on a guy's head, a big red X with the word censored across it comes on screen. The problem is, the X doesn't cover Brutus' head but more of his chin, leaving the cut completely visible. This means he can't challenge for the IC belt tonight.

Bad News Brown vs. Ken Patera

0.....k. Patera is one of the more interesting cases you'll ever find in wrestling. He was legitimately one of the strongest men in the world as he had came in third in the first World's Strongest Man contest. He was given the IC Title and was going to be given a main event level push and likely the title at one point. Until one night at a McDonald's however.

He and a Japanese wrestler were refused service for one reason or another which I believe was that the restaurant was closed. Allegedly, Ken threw a rock through the window, although he still denies he did this. Later, the pair was arrested at a hotel but they beat up the cops. He was put in jail for two years and came back as a face to feud with the Heenan Family.

Allegedly, and that should be heavily emphasized, he and Hogan were supposed to main event Mania 4, which I don't believe for a second as it just would have been awful. Anyway, at this point he just sucked bad and was a jobber to the stars so the ending here is a tad obvious.

This is little more than a squash although Patera is apparently the favorite. It's only about 6 and a half minutes though so what do you really want here? Both guys are more power guys so the styles are already clashing. Brown is in control for the earlier part of the match and the rest is just Ken trying to lock in a submission for the win because he doesn't know how to do anything else, which is rather pathetic.

He's just awful out there as his only moves are the bearhug and the full nelson. He gets one on but the other, the nelson, never happens. Brown wins it after a running enziguri called the Ghetto Blaster which is just a sweet name to say the least.

Rating: D+. This was bad. Patera was just horrible and while Brown was pretty good, there was just way too much of a clash of styles to overcome. It was a good try I guess, but at the end there was just too high of a level of suck to overcome.

WWF is promoting boxing for some reason.

Hogan and Savage say that Elizabeth is their secret weapon. Doesn't that kind of blow the secret aspect of it?

Rick Rude vs. Junk Yard Dog

Rude is of course a master on the mic as he always is, despite saying the exact same thing every time. At the same time, JYD continues to be the most overrated wrestler I've ever been forced to watch. He does nothing of note ever except head butt people. What's the appeal of that, seriously? Graham says that he practices headbutting cars. Number one, why would Graham know that, and B, what in the world is Graham on?

Neither guy really does anything special here as it's mainly rest holds and punching. Eventually Rude puts him down and goes to the top rope where he pulls his tights down to show tights with Roberts' wife on them. This was in the middle of a

huge feud with Rude and Roberts.

Rude has a gimmick of picking a woman to kiss before every match. One night he picked Roberts' wife Cheryl and the kiss had no effect at all. This started the feud because it was apparently Rude's fault that Cheryl let him kiss her. Anyway, it's a DQ finish as Roberts runs down and beats up Rude because of the tights thing.

Rating: D. This was somehow worse than the last match. Back to back matches each running about six and a half minutes and both being horrible is a bad way to get a show going after a good time limit draw match. Seriously, Dog was awful as always so at least he's consistent, Rude wasn't sure of what he was doing yet, and Roberts had to save the whole thing. That's never a good sign.

Honky Tonk Man says he doesn't care who he faces tonight.

Bolsheviks vs. Powers of Pain

The Powers are actually faces at this point and managed by some guy named the Baron. They were pretty badly hated though while Demolition was ridiculously popular, leading to a double switch at Survivor Series. Once again, it's a clash of styles. Neither team is popular or hated enough to really be cared about here so this is more filler as they're beginning to acknowledge that this is a very bad card overall and they have no idea what they're doing.

The Powers are definitely the best team here though and it's painfully obvious that they're carrying this thing. The Baron might be the most worthless manager of all time which is saying something as the Russians are managed by Slick. Warlord never once goes off his feet in this which makes the Russians look even weaker. This is a squash despite the Powers never really being in control until the end. Barbarian hits a sweet headbutt from the top for the pin and a surprisingly good pop.

Rating: C+. This was miles better than the previous two squashes as it was actually a squash and not a squash designed to look like a real match. It was designed to make the Powrs look good before the big showdown with Demolition, but the double turn that was absolutely necessary given the circumstances changed those plans in a big hurry.

Survivor Series promo, complete with footage from WM 3, as WWF continues to attempt to crush the NWA which I'll cover more in detail when we cover the Survivor Series.

Brother Love Show

Hacksaw is your guest. Love was a parody of corrupt televangelists at the time which is really quite funny when you think about it, or at least it is to me. I used to be scared to death of him. Hacksaw might have been the third or fourth biggest face in the company at this time after the Mega Powers and arguably Roberts. Actually, I'd say he was third and even second after February when Savage turned on my first birthday.

Duggan might be the simplest character of all time yet he's just flat out awesome and so over it's scary to say the least. More or less he calls out Dino Bravo, saying that he's not a good Canadian after Love mentions him. He then just yells at Love to scare the heck out of him which is great because it's so basic yet so awesome. He looks like this big grizzled mountain man with a stick that he threatens people with as he imposes his will on them. How awesome is that? Duggan chases him off to end this.

Another boxing promo as I guess we're cross promoting now. Now that I remember it, Leonard was in the front row at Mania 5 and they mention him by name.

Intercontinental Title: Honky Tonk Man vs. ???

This is your famous moment from this show and it's by far and

away the shortest of the matches on the card. Honky was supposed to fight Brutus in a rematch from Mania 4 but he's hurt so it's the new #1 contender. Honky still holds the mega record for the IC belt at about 16 months or so. Fink apparently doesn't know who it is which is stupid as Okerlund knew earlier but Honky didn't want to know.

Warrior's music hits and the roof goes off. Warrior beats Honky in about 15 seconds which was just a beatdown. The people are marking the heck out over this and I can't blame them as Warrior was even more insane back then, making this just sweet to see as Honky was annoying and finally got put into his place. At least he's not in drag though.

Rating: A+. This is complete and utter perfection for what it was supposed to be. Honky had been the bane of wrestling fans' existences for about 16 months as he had constantly gotten himself counted out or disqualified to hold onto the title. Warrior just bull rushed him and beat the living tar out of him in like 15 seconds. To say the fans exploded is an understatement. They blew the roof off the place and the moment is absolutely perfect.

Survivor Series 88 is going to be a year after Survivor Series 87. This is three and a half minutes of video from last year's show. Is there a point to this? I mean we're getting long clips of it, upwards of 30 straight seconds and a minute a match. They skip the women's match though as the diva hating started back then. At the end they have Hogan posing, despite him losing that night.

Don Muraco vs. Dino Bravo

Muraco was about done at this point and Bravo was on his way to being about the level that Miz is on at the moment. Yeah, that must have been an intermission. Heenan comes to the broadcast booth before the match to say that the heels in the main event are ready and the faces are terrified. Monsoon

throws him out. This is another rematch from the tournament. Heenan comes back.

This match is less about the match and more about Graham and Heenan arguing about who is stronger, despite neither managing either guy. Muraco used to have Graham as his manager and a lot of the criticism comes from an attempt by Bravo at the world bench pressing record at the first Rumble.

He didn't get it of course but did with Jesse's help. Yet again, we have a clash of styles but in this one it works a lot better because Muraco can wrestle a technical set well enough to make this work. This only goes about five and a half minutes but they tell a decent little story that ends with Bravo winning with his side suplex.

Rating: B-. This was pretty good I thought. Now it wasn't a classic, but it was fine for what it was: two power guys hitting each other. It passed the time ok but I wish we had less arguing with the announcers. It was just getting annoying at the end with Graham incessantly whining about how it wasn't fair.

Holy crap it's ANOTHER Survivor Series promo. I think WWF is being too subtle here.

Ventura has taken money from DiBiase apparently.

Tag Titles: Demolition vs. Hart Foundation

This is two years before we get what I think is the best PPV tag title match ever. It's one of the better match on the card so hopefully this is good. The Harts are glorified jobbers here as they're freshly face and against the monsters known as Demolition. Even though they're former champions somehow they're jobbers. That makes limited sense even in wrestling. Jimmy Hart, the former Hart Foundation manager, is a special adviser here.

Axe and Bret start us off here. Billy thinks Bret is the smallest guy out there. Where would we be without his expert wisdom? The Harts speed it up and work on the arm of Smash. Axe kicks Anvil in the back of the head to take over though and the bearded wonder is in trouble. Billy says once they win the tag titles the Harts are going to go outside, grab a girl and do some damage to her. WHAT IS WITH THIS GUY?

Bret gets sent into the post shoulder first and HARD too. That looked very painful and Bret sells it like the master of selling that he is. Neidhart (called Hitman by Billy of course) chases Jimmy to the back as Bret's arm is destroyed even further. Graham talks about some top rope move Demolition is about to do while Smash just stands there on the apron. Dang I'm getting tired of his idiocy. It's not even funny.

Hot tag to Anvil after Bret gets a desperation clothesline but of course the referee doesn't see it. And then he gets the tag like 8 seconds later. I've never gotten the point of that. If you're just going to do it again the next chance you get what's the point of the false tag? It did add some heat to the second one so maybe that's it. It would make sense.

Powerslam to Smash gets two. Axe has apparently left to chase an ice cream truck or something as he's completely gone. Ah there he is to break up a backbreaker from Bret. Fuji is up on the apron but Anvil drills him. The Megaphone from Axe ends this though in a CHEAP ending. That feels like an ending from a house show.

Rating: B-. This was a solid match as you would come to expect from these four. The Harts weren't very used to being faces at the time as Bret had just turned at Mania. Demolition was so far ahead of them at this point that the Harts got a major rub by hanging with them like this. Solid match, decent length, and so far by miles the best on the card, other than maybe the opening contest.

For the love of god we get it about Survivor Series.

Warrior says he's proud of his little warriors.

Hercules vs. Jake Roberts

Is it filler? Yep, it certainly is. Honestly, is it that hard to have another big match on the card other than the main event? I know there's got to be something big out there. Why couldn't it be Roberts vs. Rude in a big match? That would at least be interesting. Heenan not being at ringside means something apparently, as he's about to leave Hercules to make Herc a face.

It's a very basic match here until I get a huge laugh as Hercules puts on a chinlock and can clearly be seen calling spots to Jake. Graham deserves a raise for the save he makes by saying that when he was a wrestler and used a hold like this he would be telling his opponent that he was going down and that there was no way he could win.

That my friends, is an announcer covering for a mistake by a wrestler. It's plausible at least. It's complete BS, but it's plausible. Other than getting a good laugh and a surprise after Graham calls a move a bump, this is a pretty bland match. I can almost call every spot before it happens.

Roberts goes for the DDT, he gets backdropped, he misses a running knee, and we move to the next sequence. That's just not a good sign at all no matter what. Roberts eventually gets the DDT and that means the end.

Rating: C-. My goodness these matches have been bad. I don't mean the in ring work is bad as it's been acceptable, but they're just there. This would be a kick great house show, but this is a PPV which I guess at the time was fine since no one knew what they were doing with it. This is another match that's just there. It's not great but it's just barely passable.

Far too long of a recap talking about the build for the main event. Part of this is about Jesse being bought off, mainly due to him supposedly being afraid of Andre.

Mega Powers vs. Mega Bucks

The crowd pops big for the announcement as we finally have something good going here. Jesse's pop is very solid while not being huge. The heels have no music, which is sad considering DiBiase has some of the best music of all time. The pop for the faces is great and amazingly enough they come out to the same music which isn't Real American. Hogan, actually letting someone else have top billing? WHAT THE HECK???

Liz of course looks insanely good in the red and yellow dress. The start of this takes forever as I guess the WWF wasn't too hot on the idea of a crowd being into the match so they had to kill it for a bit. Ventura decides to change the location of the tag ropes. Who in the world freaking cares? Hogan just doesn't look right with writing on his tights. Savage and Andre start which was a big match we never really got the proper version of.

We saw a few of them but never the true showdown we could have gotten. The match is given some time but it's still less than 14 minutes. It's what you'd expect from a main event tag though, as the faces start strong leading to a face comeback before the finish. In this case, the finish is pretty famous as the heels knock the faces to the floor and Liz gets up on the apron. She famously takes off her skirt to reveal her underwear and some very nice legs.

This was insane at the time as Liz was always viewed as a lady and for once she's being viewed as a sex symbol. Anyway, Andre gets knocked down as DiBiase gets the elbow and gets pinned. The pin is funny as Hogan covers after a leg drop and Savage has to shove Ventura's arm down for the three as he didn't want to make the count. Post match we get the celebration with

Liz in Hogan's arms which doesn't sit well with Savage as we plant the seeds for WM 5.

Rating: B. This was fine for a main event tag match as it was all about the biggest feud and biggest team in the company. It also set a very tiny bit of Mania 5 and advanced the major feuds. The wrestling is just what you would expect which is fine. This was perfectly acceptable.

Overall Rating: D+. I know it's the first of its kind, but this show just flat out sucked. The main event is good and the tag title match was ok but other than that, this was just horrid. It's a bunch of random matches which meant nothing and no one really wanted to watch. This was like a house show with a title change and a big main event. While obviously the series would improve, this was a very bad start for it. Watch it for the fact that it's the inaugural Summerslam, but that's it.

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