

Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2015 (2016 Redo): Just Listen

Royal Rumble 2015

Date: January 25, 2015

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 17,164

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler

Now this is one I've been looking forward to and dreading at the same time. I actually didn't mind the main event the first time around but ever since then I haven't been able to think of a single good thing that match did. It should be interesting (hopefully) to see how far this thing has fallen in just a year. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Tyson Kidd/Cesaro vs. New Day

Talk about a year making a big difference. Cesaro and Kidd looked to be the hottest team in years and now they're both out while New Day, who looked to be a horrible disaster, actually IS the hottest team in years. As usual, time can change so much in wrestling. As usual, Woods is the odd man out here. Adam Rose is here with Kidd/Cesaro for no adequately explained reason but the fans would rather cheer for Cesaro anyway.

Kidd and Big E. get things going as the announcers talk about the Rumble instead. Ok to be fair, it's a pre-show tag match with nothing on the line so I can live with it here. Big E. grabs a few backbreakers to start before it's off to Kofi for two off a dropkick. Cesaro comes in for a BIG reaction and you can tell who the star of this match is going to be.

It's quickly back to Big E. who takes over with a shoulder in the corner, followed by a middle rope cross body from Kofi. Lawler: "I like New Day but I'm excited to see what they're going to evolve into." Cesaro and Kidd take Kofi into the corner and I still don't get why Rose is on the floor. Like, I don't remember that in the slightest and it's bizarre to see a year later. The Cesaro Swing into the dropkick (still awesome) gets two and we take a break.

Back with Cesaro holding Kofi in a chinlock but Kingston comes back with a dropkick to Kidd. Big E. starts cleaning house with clotheslines and the fans are REALLY not pleased. Cesaro charges into a Rock Bottom (well close enough to one) out of the corner for two. Kidd is sent to the floor for a flip dive from Kofi, followed by Big E. spearing Cesaro through the ropes for a big crash.

It's Cesaro on his own against both guys but Big E. is sent outside and Kofi gets kicked in the head, setting up a superplex into a springboard elbow from Kidd for a VERY close two. A sunset flip gets two on Kofi with Cesaro holding Kidd in place for a smart move. Trouble in Paradise is countered into the Sharpshooter but Big E. makes the save with a belly to belly. Rose gets on the apron and gets kicked in the head, only to have Kidd grab a fisherman's neckbreaker for the pin on Kofi at 11:03.

Rating: B-. Well that worked. This is why having a hot tag division is so important: you can wake up the crowd in a match that really doesn't matter either way because both teams looked great. New Day could clearly go in the ring but it would still be a few months before they really figured it out. Well that and until they were allowed to have some personality, which was the cure all along.

The opening video is about finding the moment that cements what you are. However, there can only be one. Tonight, someone's moment becomes a reality. The triple threat gets a little attention as well.

New Age Outlaws vs. Ascension

This is fallout from the Outlaws, the NWO and Acolytes beating down the Ascension for not respecting the veterans enough or something. Yeah it ruined another act that was built up for over a year in NXT but HHH's buddies got a pay per view appearance out of it. Gunn and Viktor get things going and all it takes is a hiptoss to draw the YOU STILL GOT IT chant. Fans get easier to impress every year. Dogg comes in for the shaky knee drop on Konnor but the young guys take over with a chinlock.

As the match slows down (likely so the Outlaws can breathe), JBL regales us with tales of Bullet Bob Armstrong vs. Buddy Colt. Konnor puts on a chinlock and Dogg taps, likely because tapping out wasn't a thing when he

started. The match keeps going anyway with Dogg avoiding an elbow drop, only to be chinlocked down by Viktor. That goes nowhere and the hot tag brings in Billy to clean house, only to miss the Fameasser and walk into the Fall of Man for the pin at 5:26.

Rating: D. And of course this launched the Ascension up the card and into the Tag Team Title scene forevermore. Yeah of course they never recovered after getting beaten down by a bunch of old retired guys and then winning a meaningless match against a long past retired team because....yeah I think you know why this didn't work, or at least you should.

We look at Sting saving Cena from Big Show/Kane/Seth Rollins on Raw. Sting isn't on the show or anything but he had a cameo there of course. Cena winning however did get Dolph Ziggler, Ryback and Erick Rowan their jobs back but Rowan didn't qualify for the Rumble. At least the match meant something.

The Authority isn't pleased with Sting doing that WCW nonsense around here. Cue Paul Heyman who says Brock can help with their problems, whatever those are.

Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. Damien Mizdow/Miz

The Usos are defending but Mizdow is the most over guy in the match. Speaking of things that have changed a lot in a year. The Usos took the titles from Miz/Mizdow to close out 2014 so this is the rematch. Jey and Miz get things going and the fans already want Mizdow. Something like a top rope Demolition Decapitator gets two on Miz as Cole recap Miz trying to get Naomi on their side with promises of Hollywood fame.

Miz gets crotched on top so Mizdow (gently) does the same, continuing the one idea act that somehow had fans cheering for him. Miz's top rope ax handle is punched out of the air so Mizdow goes up and dives into a punch from no one. The fans think Mizdow is awesome, meaning it's time for a chinlock from Miz himself. The Reality Check gets two but Miz won't tag Mizdow in. Again, this doesn't make a ton of sense as Miz is making himself wrestle the whole match by himself.

Anyway, Jimmy gets away and tags in Jey to take over with the running

Umaga Attack in the corner but Miz grabs a DDT for two. Everything breaks down and both Usos hit a dive to take out both challengers, though Jey almost misses Miz, drawing a rather rude chant from the fans.

Back in and Jey misses the Superfly Splash, allowing Miz to get two off the Skull Crushing Finale. The second attempt at the Splash connects but Mizdow breaks it up, drawing the loudest pop you will EVER hear for a heel breaking up a cover. Mizdow's Skull Crushing Finale gets two on Jimmy, who superkicks Miz into a powerbomb from Jey. Jimmy's Superfly Splash retains the titles at 9:20.

Rating: C-. Nothing special here as Miz/Mizdow's one joke is long past its point of interest and we're just waiting on Mizdow to turn, which would of course take too long to mean anything as WWE would screw it up again. It really is amazing how far the tag division has fallen in just a year as all the injuries and screwiness have turned the division on its head. The Usos are still the Usos though and that's all that matters.

The pre-show panel chats a bit and we look at the pre-show match.

J&J Security play the new WWE mobile game until Seth Rollins comes in to yell at them for not being serious enough. Rollins says he's been called the future but he's the right now.

Wrestlemania ad. I had forgotten how much I hated that theme song.

Bella Twins vs. Paige/Natalya

No idea what the story here is but I'm sure it's Total Divas related. Nikki and Paige get things going with Paige not being able to Irish whip her. It's off to Natalya who gets two off a kick to the back of the head. Brie comes in to work on the arm as the announcers joke about which twin is older. I'm not sure why this is supposed to be funny but they certainly think it is. A double suplex puts Brie down and Paige does her slow, crawling cover for two.

Natalya comes in and covers as well but for some reason she isn't legal. Even Paige is confused as she grabs Brie again and now tags Natalya in all legal like. Brie gets two off a quick slam and it's back to Nikki for

a Hennig neck snap. Lawler: "Name two countries and then a state." Cole: "It was a joke." It's as random as it sounds. Now it's off to Lawler approving of the Bellas' looks as they take turns on Natalya for some near falls.

Brie puts on a chinlock for a bit before both Bellas grab a leg and roll forward to flip Natalya onto the back of her head. Nikki puts on a headscissors and does push-ups to drive Natalya's face mere inches away from the mat. Natalya powers up and drops Nikki on her back for the break and avoids a clothesline, only to have Brie pull Paige off the apron. Nikki's big forearm puts Natalya away at 8:02.

Rating: D. We don't even have time for a hot tag? This wasn't much to see but again, it's all about the Bellas because they're the stars on Total Divas and know how to act like the Kardashians or whatever. Nikki would get a lot better after another six months on top of the division or so, but that would be a very long six months.

Roman Reigns says he'll beat his performance from last year.

Stardust does his usual and Goldust says he's right.

Rusev says he'll win and promises to crush whoever wins.

Miz says this is his year and Mizdow repeats everything. Again: that's not what a stunt double does.

Big Show says he's not mortal because he's a giant.

Fandango says no one understands the power of the tango.

YES, Daniel Bryan thinks he can get back to the main event of Wrestlemania.

We recap the triple threat for the World Title. Rollins tried to cash in Money in the Bank on Lesnar at Night of Champions while Cena was challenging, triggering a feud between Rollins and Cena. Tonight they both get their shot in what should be awesome.

WWE World Title: John Cena vs. Seth Rollins vs. Brock Lesnar

Lesnar is defending and this is one fall to a finish. The fans just explode on Cena with the JOHN CENA SUCKS song making its return. I was there when it debuted and that's a pure thing of brilliance. Lesnar on the other hand is treated....well about how you would expect Philadelphia to react to him. Rollins bails to start and there's the first German suplex to Cena. Another one drops Cena again so J&J come in, only to get a German of their own.

Rollins kicks Cena in the head but gets pulled inside to face Brock all alone. It's time for more German suplexes and the fans loudly applaud. There's a regular suplex to Rollins and we get an ECW chant. Brock grabs a Kimura on Cena but John lifts him up, allowing Seth to springboard in with a knee to the champ. Cena and Rollins get smart and double team Lesnar, only to have Seth throw John to the floor for one off an AA.

Brock pops up like a daisy and sends both of them outside, only to have Rollins knock him into the steps. As J&J are in a heap next to the barricade, Cena starts his usual finishing sequence on Rollins but Lesnar breaks up the Shuffle with another German suplex. Seth breaks up the rolling Germans though as he needs Cena to help fight against Brock. Makes sense. A knee to the back puts Brock on the floor but the champ is right back in for the save as Seth covers Cena.

Back up and Cena throws Rollins to the floor and actually drops Brock with some clotheslines. Seth pulls Cena outside and tries a springboard, only to get caught in a big F5. That is some terrifying strength. Brock loads up a table for some reason so Cena gives him three straight AA's for two with Rollins making a last second save. There's a Curb Stomp from Seth and this time Cena has to dive in and break up the cover. The fans think this is awesome (indeed) as everyone heads outside, where Cena spears Lesnar through the barricade.

Brock keeps getting up so Cena throws him into the steps and blasts him in the face for good measure, knocking the champ onto the announcers' table. Rollins feels left out so he drives Brock through with a HUGE top rope elbow and Cena is the only one standing. The non-Lesnars head back inside and Seth hits a quick low superkick for two. The AA doesn't work so Cena Batista Bombs him for a VERY near fall.

Not to be outdone, Rollins reverses a superplex attempt into a running Buckle Bomb for two more. Both guys are spent so Rollins tries a Curb Stomp, only to get caught in the STF. Cue J&J from their comas for the save as a stretcher comes out for Brock. There's a TripleBomb for two on Cena but he ducks a briefcase shot and AA's both J's at the same time. He should not be able to do that twenty minutes into a match this physical. Or any match for that matter.

Another AA gets two on Rollins and the Curb Stomp gets the same on Cena as the fans are freaking out on these kickouts. We're told Brock has at least a broken rib as Rollins busts out the Phoenix Splash on Cena. Not that it matters as a TICKED OFF Brock gets back in for some German suplexes, only to have Seth hit him in the face with the briefcase. Rollins loads up a Curb Stomp onto the case but you don't try that on Lesnar, as he counters with a HUGE F5 to retain at 22:42.

Rating: A. Good grief what a battle. This was the night where Rollins became a star and people knew that he was going to be champion soon. Cena put in his normal amazing performance here as well, but good night Brock looked like a monster. This is the beast that WWE wanted to build up for someone to take down and it worked perfectly here. Just outstanding action here with all three looking like they had been through a war. This was the instant match of the year leader and it would take something special to knock it off.

Brock walks off as the medics are stunned.

Rumble By The Numbers video.

Royal Rumble

Good luck following that. Miz is #1 and R-Truth is #2 with 90 second intervals. They start slowly (smart here) until Truth gets in a few pelvic thrusts. Truth is sent to the apron a few times and gets crotched on the top until Bubba Ray Dudley makes a big surprise return at #3. You think that might wake the Philadelphia fans up a bit? Bubba is fired up to start and gives Miz the Dusty punches before R-Truth plays D-Von (I'm not touching that one) on What's Up.

Now it's table time but Miz gets up, only to be put back down with a 3D. There go Miz and Truth as Luke Harper is in at #4 for a hoss fight. They slug it out boo/yay style but Harper elbows out of a Bubba Bomb. A big clothesline drops Harper but Bray Wyatt is in at #5. Bubba isn't sure what to make of him and Bray does his big freaky smile. The fans want D-Von (fair enough idea) but Bray sends Bubba into a clothesline and dumps him a few seconds later.

Harper and Wyatt stare at each other and Curtis Axel is in at #6, only to have Erick Rowan jump him from behind and destroy him, kicking off Axelmania because Axel was never officially eliminated. Rowan (not part of the Family at this point) gets in and teases a reunion against Bray, only to be quickly double teamed. Erick almost gets Harper out but Bray dumps them both and points to the sign. In another surprise return, the Boogeyman is in at #7. Cole: "It's the eater of worlds against the eater of worms!" His entrance takes forever and Bray dumps him like the jobber that he is.

Sin Cara is in at #8 and gets in a few shots, only to get punched out of the air. Sister Abigail sets up another elimination and Bray is on a roll. With no one to fight, Bray grabs a mic and issues an open challenge to everyone in the back because this is his year. It's time to sing until Zack Ryder is in at #9 (apparently returning from shoulder surgery), only to be eliminated even faster than Cara.

NOW things get interesting as Daniel Bryan is in at #10 to one of the loudest reactions you'll hear since....well since the last time Bryan was in a big match probably. Daniel speeds things up a lot with some running dropkicks in the corner as JBL tells Bryan not to go so hard because he needs to pace himself. Preach it JBL. A middle rope hurricanrana puts Bray down and it's Fandango in at #11. Well that's quite the drop in star power. He goes after Bryan but stops to dance, allowing Bryan to flip out of a belly to back suplex.

We go old school (way old school actually) with an airplane spin until Tyson Kidd (with his sweet theme song) is in at #12. A springboard missile dropkick drops Bryan and Fandango is quickly dropped into the corner, leaving Kidd and Bryan to slug it out in what could rock with

about fifteen minutes. Stardust is in at #13, with Cole saying it's his Rumble debut. No Cole, no it's not. I get what he's going for and no Cole, no it's not.

Fandango and Stardust take turns skinning the cat before Stardust takes out the knee to get Fandango in trouble. Bryan eliminates Kidd but Bray is back up, only to be knocked through the ropes and out to the floor. You know that means a suicide dive from Daniel, followed by Diamond Dallas Page in at #14 for another surprise. Stardust is right on him but there's the first Diamond Cutter. JBL: "Do they teach that in yoga class?"

Fandango takes Page down but gets crotched on top, setting up a super Diamond Cutter for a very nice pop. Bray pounds on Page but takes a Diamond Cutter of his own, which is one step too far. The guy is a monster and shouldn't get dropped by a retired legend. Rusev comes in at #15 and superkicks Page before eliminating him. Side note: put Page in the Hall of Fame already. He has the resume and he's worthy of canonization after what he accomplished with Roberts and Hall.

Rusev dumps Fandango and puts Bryan on the apron, allowing Bray to knock Daniel out. That right there is pretty much it for this Rumble meaning anything as we now know it's all about Reigns, even though the fans aren't going to be interested no matter what. I know you can't have Bryan win here, but you could at least give him a run near the end. This was a bad idea and the DANIEL BRYAN chants starting up a minute after he's gone don't bode well for the rest of the show.

Goldust is in at #16, giving us Goldust, Stardust, Rusev and Wyatt. The brothers go after each other for a bit until Kofi Kingston is in at #17. Kofi goes after Bray as the fans are booing everything presented to them no matter how watchable it is. All five wind up in one corner for some reason with no eliminations until Adam Rose is in at #18. The Rosebuds do the full entrance and catch Kofi as he's launched over the top for his annual save. Rusev dumps Rose with ease and kicks Kofi out a few seconds later to get us back to four. Roman Reigns is in at #19 and oh man this is going to be good.

The fans go nuts on Reigns as he fires off the running corner clotheslines and gets rid of Goldust and Stardust in rapid succession. Big E. is in at #20 and only gets kind of booed. Rusev is right on him and that gets booed loudly out of pure spite. Rusev hits a quick Cannonball on Big E. and it's Damien Mizdow in at #21 for a bit of relief from the fans. Miz cuts him off and wants the spot but Reigns shoves him down and Damien, egged on by the crowd, goes in as well.

Mizdow cleans some house but is thrown out by Rusev in less than twenty seconds. Dang they really don't want the fans to cheer anything tonight do they? Well other than Reigns of course. Jack Swagger is in at #22 and gets in a few nice shots until Bray cuts him off. We've got Wyatt, Swagger, Reigns, Big E. and Rusev at the moment until Ryback is in at #23. That means more power brawling with Meat Hooks and suplexes all around. Bray and Rusev continue their loose alliance to to get Ryback in trouble and there's a CM Punk chant for the latest false hope.

Kane is in at #24 and you know the people aren't happy with that. The match slows down a bit with Kane putting Ryback on the apron and Big E. doing the same thing to Swagger. Those attempts go as far as you would expect and it's Dean Ambrose in at #25 to give the fans something to actually cheer for. Dean goes for Rusev to start but has to stop a charging Kane. The fans are WAY into Ambrose as he's the first guy they've wanted to cheer for in about fifteen minutes.

Titus O'Neil is in at #26 and put out in four seconds by Ambrose and Reigns. So much for that one. The ring is getting too full and Intercontinental Champion Bad News Barrett makes it even worse at lucky #27. Everyone brawls against the ropes until it's Cesaro in at #28. Cesaro fires off a bunch of European uppercuts but he can only get Ambrose to the apron. Rusev dropkicks Big E. out to clear a little room but Big Show takes his place at #29.

Everyone goes after him but Show throws them away before starting a chokeslam contest with Kane. There goes Ryback thanks to both giants and Show dumps Swagger. A chokeslam sends Rusev rolling out under the ropes and it's Dolph Ziggler in at #30 (Remember when "who is #30" was the big question every year? Now it's just another entrant. It's kind of sad

really.), giving us a final grouping of Wyatt, Rusev, Reigns, Kane, Ambrose, Barrett, Cesaro, Big Show and Ziggler.

Here's the thing: that's actually a stacked final set of people. Wyatt, Rusev, Ambrose, Barrett, Cesaro and Ziggler are crowd favorites, Big Show and Kane are at least good monsters to conquer and Reigns is....well that other group is really popular. The problem here is NO ONE but Reigns has a chance and the entire audience knows it, making this inevitable rather than anything interesting.

Ziggler superkicks the giants and takes them both down with the running DDT. Barrett is sent to the apron and superkicked out but Ziggler gets caught in the Cesaro Swing. Cesaro sends him to the apron but Dolph gets him to the apron for a superkick and an elimination, only to have Big Show and Kane put Ziggler out. That also gives Kane the all time record for Rumble eliminations.

The giants throw Bray out like he's no one (thanks for the 47 minutes Bray) and the fans are getting even angrier than they already were. So it's Ambrose/Reigns vs. Big Show/Kane with Rusev forgotten on the floor. Roman is bleeding from the mouth as he clotheslines Show down but he and Dean can't get rid of the bigger giant. Kane boots Roman in the face and the KO Punch knocks Dean silly, giving the giants an easy elimination. Reigns is suddenly even less popular as the inevitability gets that much closer. Even Cole acknowledges that the fans hate this.

Reigns fights back and the booing gets even louder until Kane and Show start fighting, because the last SIXTEEN YEARS of these two fighting isn't enough. They fight next to the ropes and Reigns gets up for a double elimination, actually sending the fans into silence for the win.

Kane and Big Show get back in and beat Roman down even more, complete with a double chokeslam. The fans remember that Rusev is still in but here's the Rock to help save his cousin. He cleans house and drops both giants to a nice reaction until Reigns Superman Punches Show into a Rock Bottom. Rock leaves and Rusev gets back in, only to get speared and eliminated to really give Roman the win at 59:31.

Rating: D-. WOW. This is somehow so much worse than I remember it as WWE

was clearly going out of its way to clear the path for Roman but the fans were having none of it. The problem here is a simple one: there was never any drama. Look back at 2012 for a second. The final two were Chris Jericho and Sheamus, neither of whom were interesting choices to win. However, the final three minutes of that match are AWESOME as you really didn't know who was going to win and both guys had a real chance. That's the easiest way to get fans to like the Rumble, or really most matches.

This Rumble is really more like 1993 than anything else. That was the year of Yokozuna and everyone knew it, though there was the slightest chance of the Undertaker winning it. However, Undertaker went out in the middle of the match and the rest was just a waiting game to see who was on Yokozuna's victim list.

That's exactly what happened here. Everyone knew Reigns was the heavy favorite no matter who they wanted to win and the ONLY person with a real chance of beating him was Bryan. This year Bryan was the twelfth man eliminated, leaving about thirty five minutes left in the match. That's a long time for the fans to sit around with little to no hope as things get worse and worse. The best false hope they had for the rest of the match was Ambrose and that just wasn't going to happen.

On top of that, you have Big Show and Kane as the big bads for Reigns to conquer. That's fine on paper, until you look at all the papers labeled "Raw Results" where you see how many times he and everyone else has beaten both of them. Instead of some group of the popular guys at the end, it was Kane and Big Show for the first ending. Then there's Rusev for the false hope spot but Reigns destroyed him too before winning.

So yeah, this was one big mess all designed for Reigns to look like a hero and it failed miserably. It boils down to a simple concept that actually takes me back to the Russo days to a degree: you have to earn it. The problem here is Reigns hasn't really accomplished anything to earn this spot and the fans are rejecting him. Austin dominating the 1998 Rumble worked because the fans had seen Austin go through a lot of wars to earn the right to be the top dog. Reigns' big moment was a win over Randy Orton at Summerslam 2014. That's not exactly huge and the fans hadn't forgotten.

Ignoring the Reigns part for a minute, this was a really dull match. Bubba was a cool surprise and Page was good for a Diamond Cutter, but Boogeyman? Other than that and Bray's dominance (which went nowhere), this was really dull stuff. Kofi being caught by the Rosebuds was a good quick chuckle but really low on his list of saves. Just a horrible Rumble from start to finish with only a few bright spots throughout.

Rock poses with Reigns and the fans STILL boo. The Authority comes out to glare a lot as Reigns celebrates and points at the sign to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. Oh yeah this was bad. The triple threat is the only thing keeping this from being a disaster as the rest of the card is a bunch of nothing tags and then a disaster of a Rumble for the last third. The Rumble itself really is that bad and drags an already bad show down even lower. It's balanced out a bit by the triple threat but twenty two minutes of awesome can't make up for an hour of horrible. Terrible show here and thankfully WWE finally figured out that Reigns wasn't ready yet, because he just wasn't here.

Ratings Comparison

Tyson Kidd/Cesaro vs. New Day

Original: B

Redo: B-

Ascension vs. New Age Outlaws

Original: D+

Redo: D

Miz/Damien Mizdow vs. Usos

Original: C-

Redo: C-

Bella Twins vs. Paige/Natalya

Original: D-

Redo: D

Brock Lesnar vs. John Cena vs. Seth Rollins

Original: A

Redo: A

Royal Rumble

Original: D+

Redo: D-

Overall Rating

Original: C+

Redo: D

How in the world did I add that one up last year?

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2015/01/25/royal-rumble-2015-more-teasing-than-a-15-year-old-on-prom-night/>

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