

Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania I (2015 Redo): The First Big One

Wrestlemania I

Date: March 31, 1985

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

Attendance: 19,121

Commentators: Gorilla Monsoon, Jesse Ventura

The first Wrestlemania is one of those shows that really doesn't need an introduction. While it's really just a very glorified house show, it was clear that there was something special about this show. This is the start of a new way of life in professional wrestling and everything is about to change. Let's get to it.

The opening video is a montage of shots of the matches tonight with the Wrestlemania logo in the middle. Not exactly high thinking stuff but it was a simpler time.

Gorilla (with more hair than you'll ever see him have) welcomes us to the show and throws it to the Fink who introduces Gene Okerlund to sing the Star Spangled Banner. This is one of the only times it wouldn't be America the Beautiful. The crowd joins in singing for a nice moment.

Tito Santana says he doesn't know anything about the Executioner but no one is going to stop him from achieving his goals. Arriba!

The Executioner, a masked man better known as Playboy Buddy Rose (a big star in Portland Wrestling and the AWA who didn't do much elsewhere), says he's going after Tito's leg. So much for secrecy.

Tito Santana vs. The Executioner

It's a crisscross to start the first match in Wrestlemania history. Tito quickly fires him out to the floor, followed by a headlock takeover for two back inside. Executioner tries to hide in the corner but it's not

that hard to find someone in a big red mask three feet in front of Santana. Tito follows him in but takes a headbutt to the ribs to give Executioner control.

An awkward looking backdrop puts Tito down as there hasn't been much of the promised leg work. Maybe Executioner is smarter than he seems and was lying to throw Tito off. Santana slams Executioner off the top but a splash hits knees and now it's time for the leg. Tito easily kicks him to the floor though and the flying forearm sets up Tito's Figure Four for the submission at 4:50.

Rating: D+. This was just a squash for Tito as he was trying to get the Intercontinental Title back. Executioner was one of the standard characters of the day who would show up, possibly be played by multiple people on different nights, and rarely win a match. All the announcers had to do was build the masked man up as a threat to the star and go to the match. It's such a simple idea and that's all it needed to be.

S.D. Jones, a self described music man, is more than ready for King Kong Bundy on the biggest show ever.

King Kong Bundy promises a splash and a five count.

King Kong Bundy vs. S.D. Jones

Bundy shoves him into the corner and hits a pair of splashes for the pin at 24 seconds. This is billed as nine seconds for a record but it takes nearly double that much time for the first splash to connect. To continue the lying, Bundy only got a three count. How can I ever trust someone like that?

Matt Borne, a pretty generic heel (I mean he wears sunglasses inside. How can he possibly be a good guy?), thinks Ricky Steamboat is just too nice of a guy and needs to get beaten up.

Steamboat says he's ready but Okerlund talks over him to throw it back to the arena. That's rather rude of him. Ricky was talking about developing his meanness, a goal he failed to achieve in spectacular fashion.

Matt Borne vs. Ricky Steamboat

Steamboat is a newcomer and in trunks instead of tights here. Feeling out process to start and a big chop puts Borne down. A headlock has Borne in trouble and a big atomic drop makes him gyrate a bit. The left handed Borne comes back with some shots to the ribs and a hard whip into the corner, only to have Steamboat come back with chops and another headlock. Ricky wins a slugout and drops a knee for two. Back up and the high cross body gives Steamboat the pin at 4:38.

Rating: D+. This could be subtitled "Hi, I'm Ricky Steamboat and I'm a good wrestler." Borne could have been any other guy and the match would have been the same. Steamboat would take some time to get anywhere but he was one of the smoothest wrestlers of all time and always worth checking out.

As I mentioned earlier, this is really more of a house show than anything else as we haven't had an important match so far and we're about twenty five minutes in.

It should be noted that Lord Alfred Hayes is introducing the pre-match interviews (which are all pre-taped from earlier in the day). This time, Steamboat and Borne both have to made sudden shifts to avoid running into Hayes' camera shot.

David Sammartino is ready to show that he's not just his father's son. Of course his father will be at ringside.

Johnny Valiant says his man Brutus Beefcake isn't worried about the son of an overrated legend.

Brutus Beefcake vs. David Sammartino

They make no secret of the fact that this is little more than a way to have Bruno appear on the show. Bruno and Valiant are the seconds here and the match takes its sweet time to get going. David is in good shape but is a very boring looking wrestler. Brutus on the other hand has a great look but is very green at this point. It's a slow start as Jesse thinks the loser will have his career set back six months to a year. They start slow with Brutus being sent out to the floor for a conference with Valiant.

Back in and David grabs a front facelock but gets countered into a headlock. David gets to his feet and takes Brutus down for a leg lock. The fans aren't exactly thrilled with this one. Brutus fights up again and drops some heavy forearms followed by a powerslam. After more punishment it's David fighting back and trying to look as much like his dad as he can. They fight to the floor and the managers get involved for the double DQ at 11:44.

Rating: D. So far this is the low mark in the history of Wrestlemania. That being said, it's not so much bad as it is really dull. They were just doing basic moves to each other for about ten minutes until the older guys came in. At the end of the day, Bruno was the star here and David wasn't very good. There isn't much you can do to get around that and David never did.

Greg Valentine says he's lost weight and is ready to defend the Intercontinental Title.

Junkyard Dog says he needs a bone to chew on and he'll be able to afford a lot more once he wins that title.

Intercontinental Title: Junkyard Dog vs. Greg Valentine

Valentine is defending and the graphic says this is the Inter-Continental Title. Greg also has Jimmy Hart in his corner. Dog starts with some heavy headbutts and right hands, followed by more headbutts from all fours to put Valentine down in the corner. Back up and Valentine actually wins a test of strength (I didn't see that one coming), setting up a wristlock.

Now we get more into Greg's standard operating procedure as he drives knees into Dog's hamstring and cranks on the leg. Back up and Dog limps around but is still able to fire off right hands and headbutts. You might say his offense is limited but that might be giving him too much credit. Jimmy Hart tries to get on the apron but Valentine hits him by mistake, only to grab a rollup for the pin on Dog with his feet on the ropes at 6:55.

Rating: D. Another dull match here but at least the fans were way behind Dog. The guy might not have been the most athletic or active wrestler in

the world but there's no denying his charisma and how much the fans got behind him. It was pretty sure that Valentine was going to be fighting Santana next so the ending was never in any real doubt here but at least it was short.

Speaking of Santana, he comes out to tell the referee about Valentine's feet being on the ropes. The referee says restart it but Valentine walks out, earning Dog a countout win. That's quite the meaningless change and the fans really don't care.

Iron Sheik and Nikolai Volkoff don't like America and want to take the Tag Team Titles back to Iran and the USSR respectfully. Their manager Freddie Blassie agrees.

The Tag Team Champions the US Express (Mike Rotundo and Barry Windham with manager Lou Albano) don't have much to say but they're ready.

Tag Team Titles: US Express vs. Iron Sheik/Nikolai Volkoff

Volkoff and Sheik are challenging and Nikolai actually gets the full Soviet national anthem out before the champions hit the ring. The Express are heavy favorites here but Sheik shoulders Mike down to start. Some dropkicks mostly miss Sheik but he goes down anyway. That's very nice of him. Maybe he isn't as evil as he seems. Windham comes in with a top rope elbow to the head and the champs are in early control.

Rotundo is tagged back in to face Volkoff. Nikolai's arm gets worked over in a hurry with both champions coming off the top rope and dropping down onto it. Sheik gets suplexed but Volkoff gets in a knee to the back to finally give the evil foreigners control. Back to Sheik who can't keep Rotundo in trouble much longer, allowing Mike to dive over for the tag. Barry comes in with a bulldog for two but everything breaks down. In the melee, Sheik uses Blassie's cane to knock Windham out cold for the pin and the titles at 6:56.

Rating: C-. This was just for the historical value and little more. Sheik and Volkoff getting the titles was a major surprise but they would drop them back to the Express just a few months later. They kept the formula simple here as the Express dominated until the very end where the

villains cheated to take the belts. Quick and efficient here to give the show something historic.

Sheik and Volkoff say they're the best in the world and Blassie denies having a cane.

The announcers talk for a bit as we're in an intermission.

Big John Studd and Bobby Heenan have \$15,000 in a bag (very impressive since you can see it's mostly \$1 bills) which they certainly won't lose in the body slam match.

Andre the Giant vs. Big John Studd

This is Studd's money vs. Andre's career and you can only win by slamming your opponent. The Heenan Family jumped Andre and cut off his afro on Saturday Night's Main Event to set this up. Studd goes right after Andre to start but the Giant will have none of it and chops Studd out to the floor. Back in and Andre lays on Studd in the corner, followed by a bearhug. The fans chant for a slam but they're stuck with more slow non-action instead. Studd's kick to the ample gut gets caught and Andre kicks at the free leg a few times, setting up the slam on Studd (in a pretty famous visual) at 5:54.

Rating: F+. I can't say this is a full on failure as the fans loved the ending but the rest of the match was such a boring mess. Andre was barely able to move here and that bearhug ate up nearly a third of the entire match. Thankfully they kept this really short because I don't want to imagine what they were going to do with even more time.

Heenan grabs the money and runs off but Andre doesn't seem to mind.

In the back, Andre laughs off the idea of retiring.

Rock mega star Cyndi Lauper and Wendi Richter are ready for Richter's rematch for the Women's Title. Richter really doesn't have the best voice so Lauper was the better choice for the talking.

Lelani Kai says she's going to "come back to the dressing room with her hand in victor."

Women's Title: Lelani Kai vs. Wendi Richter

Now this is big. Richter, the challenger here, is the second most popular person in the company (yes probably more than Andre) but Kai stole the title with Moolah's help. Moolah vs. Richter is still the big feud here as Richter has Lauper in her corner. Lauper would start feuding with Moolah and then moved on to Roddy Piper to really blow the doors open on this whole Rock and Wrestling Connection.

In a rather famous shot, Richter and Lauper run through the back on their way to the ring. That's one of those clips you've probably seen in a history package or two over the years. Feeling out process to start with both of them trying a wristlock. A hammerlock has Kai in trouble and she taps but that won't mean anything for about another ten years.

The champ works on a wristlock of her own and pulls Richter down by the hair. Back up and Kai charges into two boots in the corner to change control. Moolah tries to rip Richter's hair out but Lauper goes over and drills her. Richter drills Kai with some forearms and a fireman's carry slam (think a reverse Attitude Adjustment) for two. The champ grabs a backbreaker for two of her own but Wendi rolls through a high cross body (well mostly as she didn't get all the way through so Kai had to lay there for a bit) for the pin and the title at 6:12.

Rating: D. The match was nothing to see but it was one of the most academic endings of all time. Richter getting the title back sent the fans through the roof and Lauper's enthusiasm made it even better. Women's wrestling was very different at this point and things would evolve quite a bit over the next few years. This would be the last big moment for Wendi though as she would get screwed out of the title in a legit shoot by Moolah about eight months later. Richter had a nasty contract dispute and the WWF pulled a screwjob to get the title off of her.

Richter and Lauper spin around in circles post match. They continue to be happy in the back after the match.

It's time to introduce the celebrities for the main event, starting with the guest ring announcer Billy Martin, the multiple time manager of the

New York Yankees. He introduces guest timekeeper Liberace, who comes out with the Rockettes for a little dancing. If this isn't your taste in entertainment, Muhammad Ali is introduced as the guest referee for outside the ring. Ali gets by far the biggest reaction as a legend here in the Garden and around the world. Another boxer, Jose Torres, is in the front row.

Roddy Piper/Paul Orndorff vs. Mr. T./Hulk Hogan

This is the definition of the main event as it's the biggest match on the show by leaps and bounds. The idea here is that Piper attacked Cyndi Lauper and friends when Lauper was being presented with an award. Hulk Hogan ran in for the save, setting up a showdown with Piper at the War to Settle the Score. The match resulted in a big brawl and Orndorff came in to help Piper. Mr. T. was in the front row and ran in to help his friend, setting up a huge brawl and this match.

Piper and Orndorff are played to the ring by the New York Pipe and Drum Corps but Hogan and Mr. T. come out to Eye of the Tiger from Rocky III. I'll go with the good guys on this one. Piper and Orndorff will have Piper's bodyguard Cowboy Bob Orton in their corner while Hogan and Mr. T. will have Jimmy Snuka. As Hogan and Mr. T. come through the back, Vince McMahon can be seen in the hallway. After all that, we're FINALLY ready to go.

Orndorff has a broom for no apparent reason as Monsoon recaps everything and announces Pat Patterson as the inside referee. Hogan and Orndorff get things going as you would think they're keeping the big attractions (Mr. T. in general and Hogan vs. Piper) back for a bit. Apparently not as Piper tags in before there's any contact and Mr. T. demands to come in. They go nose to nose and slap each other in the face before going down to the mat for some amateur wrestling. The fans chant T. as you would expect them to.

Mr. T. picks him up for an airplane spin and slams Piper down, drawing everyone in for a huge brawl. Ali, Snuka and Orton get in with Piper getting right in Ali's face. Amazingly enough it's a REALLY STUPID IDEA to get in Muhammad Ali's face as he swings at Piper, who is quick enough

to get to the floor. Piper and Orndorff try to leave but the cops escort them back to the ring.

Back in and the villains are rammed into each other, leaving Hogan to drive Piper's head into the mat. Mr. T. comes back in to help Hogan with a double big boot. Some hiptosses keep Piper and Orndorff in trouble and it's back to Hogan for another boot which Piper out to the floor. Orndorff finally does something right as he knocks Hogan outside where Piper gets in a chair shot.

Ali breaks up any further cheating and it's Hogan in trouble back inside. Mr. T. is dragged out of the ring, allowing a double atomic drop to keep Hogan in trouble. Piper comes back in for a knee lift for two, followed by a top rope elbow from Orndorff for the same. Orndorff isn't as lucky the second time though as he misses a top rope knee, allowing for the hot tag off to Mr. T.

The villains quickly take Mr. T. down to the mat though and slaps on a front facelock. Monsoon criticizes Mr. T.'s technique in trying to escape but he gets out anyway and tags in Hogan as everything breaks down. Orton goes up top with for a shot with his cast but it hits Orndorff by mistake, giving Hogan the pin at 13:24.

Rating: C+. This is another match where the ending was obvious but it was all about the spectacle as we got there. Hogan was the megastar to end all megastars here and everything came off well. It's not a great match or anything but it's a lot of fun and that's all it needed to be.

Piper decks Patterson and leaves. Orndorff wakes up and has no idea what happened but leaves without any violence.

We look back at the ending as everyone leaves.

Mr. T. says this is real and not for wimps. Hogan says that was what it was all about. Snuka says these men are his brothers. He would be gone soon after this.

Gorilla and Jesse wrap it up.

A package of stills from the show and the credits (a sign of the times)

take us out.

Overall Rating: C-. Here's the thing: this show isn't very good. There are far worse cards out there, but this one is all about the history and atmosphere than anything else. To be fair, no one knew what this was going to be at the time and it blew away all the expectations. This felt like something special and that's exactly what it was. It's definitely a show that you have to see at some point in your life as a fan and you can feel the history. The show flies by and nothing feels long as only two matches break ten minutes. Not a great show, but one of the most important of all time.

Ratings Comparison

Tito Santana vs. Executioner

Original: C

2013 Redo: C-

2015 Redo: D+

King Kong Bundy vs. S.D. Jones

Original: N/A

2013 Redo: N/A

2015 Redo: N/A

Ricky Steamboat vs. Matt Borne

Original: C-

2013 Redo: D+

2015 Redo: D+

Brutus Beefcake vs. David Sammartino

Original: D-

2013 Redo: D+

2015 Redo: D

Junkyard Dog vs. Greg Valentine

Original: D+

2013 Redo: D+

2015 Redo: D

Nikolai Volkoff/Iron Sheik vs. US Express

Original: B-

2013 Redo: C

2015 Redo: C-

Andre the Giant vs. Big John Studd

Original: D+

2013 Redo: D

2015 Redo: F+

Lelani Kai vs. Wendi Richter

Original: B

2013 Redo: D

2015 Redo: D

Hulk Hogan/Mr. T. vs. Paul Orndorff/Roddy Piper

Original: B

2013 Redo: B-

2015 Redo: C+

Overall Rating

Original: C-

2013 Redo: D+

2015 Redo: C-

Forgive me on the first version. It was literally the first review I've ever done so I actually didn't know what I was doing yet.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/08/history-of-wrestlemania-with-kb-wrestlemania-1-just-a-big-house-show/>

And the 2013 Redo:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2013/03/10/wrestlemania-count-up-wrestlemania-i-it-all-starts-with-a-tag-match/>

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<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2018/01/26/new-book-kbs-history-of-the-wwe-championship-2018-updated-version/>

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