

Summerslam Count-Up – 1990 (2022 Redo): Sweet, Sweet Nostalgia

Summerslam 1990

Date: August 27, 1990

Location: Philadelphia Spectrum, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 19,304

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Roddy Piper

This is the requested redo for the year and I'm rather happy about that. I watched this show more times than I can count as a kid as it was the first wrestling show I had on video. I've seen it so many times that I can probably quote at least a bit of the commentary from every match and know most of the matches by heart so looking back at it should be fun. It's a double main event as Hulk Hogan returns to face Earthquake and Ultimate Warrior defends the WWF Title against Rick Rude in a cage. Let's get to it.

The opening video hypes up the show, including the main events. This gives us the classic 80s Vince McMahon hype voice and that is always going to work. At the end of the day, the guy is a promoter and a really good one.

Rockers vs. Power And Glory

Vince promises this this is going to be a HUMDINGER so you know he's serious. Shawn comes to the ring so gingerly that you would think he had a bad knee and wasn't ready to go here or something. Power And Glory, already in the ring, (it was a different time) jump Michaels before the bell and hit him in the knee with the chain to give him a reason to be down. Why is that so much to ask?

Roma hammers on Jannetty to start but Marty fights back with armdrags and dropkick (why yes, he is a face in a tag team). Slick (the evil, yet stylish) manager offers a distraction as Piper wants to know which one is

the power and which is the glory. You mean him being named HERCULES isn't a hint? Jannetty gets beaten down as Piper talks about Mick Jagger and David Bowie, perhaps missing the idea of the Rockers.

We pause to take out Michaels again as this continues to be a handicap, including a gorilla press to Jannetty. A small package doesn't get Jannetty out of trouble as Roma comes back in and hits some backbreakers. Jannetty powerslams his way to freedom and hits the top rope fist drop (such a simple yet good looking finisher) with Hercules having to make a save. That's finally enough as the PowerPlex puts Jannetty away at 5:59.

Rating: C. Kind of a weird way to start the show here but I do like the idea of just getting in and out without trying to do anything nuts. Power And Glory weren't some great team but they could beat Marty in a handicap match. That's all you had here and it went well enough, even if it was pretty clear that Shawn shouldn't have been out there in the first place.

Post match Shawn gets in the ring and the big beatdown is on, with Marty trying to cover Shawn's knee (another Jagger/Bowie reference from Piper). Of note: the VHS that I remember glitched at this point so I didn't remember seeing the last minute and a half of the match until I was almost twenty years old. Shawn does a stretcher job and would be out of action for about a month and a half.

Mr. Perfect isn't worried about facing the Texas Tornado on less than ten days' notice, even if he knows almost nothing about Tornado. Bobby Heenan talks about how worthless Texas tornadoes are because you can see them coming a mile away. Then Perfect gets REALLY serious and says no one beats him.

The Texas Tornado promises to come out of the clouds and be powerful, unpredictable and devastating. Then he'll go back into the clouds with the Intercontinental Title. For some reason, that one has always stuck with me, even if it isn't very good.

Intercontinental Title: Mr. Perfect vs. Texas Tornado

Perfect, with Bobby Heenan, is defending. Of note: Tornado was in yellow trunks for the interview and is in white here so he doesn't match

Perfect's yellow and blue singlet. The lockup goes to Tornado, who shoves him into the corner without much trouble. That's enough to send Perfect outside, as commentary thinks they might be surprised by the strength. So they haven't even looked at Tornado?

Back in and they circle each other a bit as Piper wants to know what Heenan knows about wrestling. A hard whip into the corner sets up a slam on Perfect and a clothesline puts him on the floor, with the required big bump from Perfect. Back in again and Perfect slugs his way out of a wristlock, setting up a sleeper. Some shots to the face in the corner don't do much to Tornado, who catapults Perfect into the post and grabs the Claw. The Tornado Punch (HUGE bump from Perfect) connects for the pin and the title at 5:15.

Rating: C-. This wasn't much of a match as Tornado was a bit all over the place (shocking) and a lot of the stuff was rather basic. That being said, this was all about the surprise factor as Tornado gets the title almost immediately after debuting. Of note: for someone perfect, Perfect lost every pay per view match he had in 1990, though finishing as runner up in the Royal Rumble could have been worse.

Perfect staggers out of the arena in even more great selling.

In the back, Gene Okerlund can't find Sweet Sapphire (uh oh) but Heenan and Perfect come in to rant about the bad refereeing. Tornado CHEATED by sending him into the post and now it's time to pay. Well not now but in the near future, though that might qualify as semantics.

Sweet Sapphire vs. Sensational Queen Sherri

Sherri has a huge mask on which absolutely TERRIFIED me as a kid. And there's no Sapphire, despite the music playing multiple times. That's going to be a thirty second countdown forfeit and no match. Granted the fact that Sherri was in a full length dress makes me wonder what she was exactly planning for this one anyway. Commentary is very confused by Sapphire's whereabouts.

Dusty Rhodes is in the back and says he doesn't know where Sapphire is either as she disappeared ten minutes after they arrived. No one has seen

her and he is rather worried. Cue Jim Duggan for a rather random cameo, saying everyone is still looking for Sapphire. With Duggan gone, Dusty says that Sapphire is getting a lot of really expensive gifts but that isn't his business. GEE, I WONDER WHO IN THE WWF IS RICH ENOUGH TO SEND HER THOSE PRESENTS!

Tito Santana vs. Warlord

Slick is here with Warlord and Piper promises to not make a bunch of taco jokes about Santana. A headlock doesn't work for Santana to start but a dropkick manages to put Warlord down. Back up and Santana looks to load up a hurricanrana (not quite in 1990) so he can hammer away to knock Warlord outside.

That's fine with Warlord, who drives him back first into the post, allowing Slick to stalk him with a shoe (yes a shoe). The slow forearms keep Santana down until he gets a boot up in the corner to slow Warlord down. The flying forearm rocks Warlord but he gets the foot on the rope at the last minute. Warlord blocks a monkey flip out of the corner though and a running powerslam finishes at 5:28.

Rating: C. This is a fine example of a power vs. speed match and Santana knows how to do that as well as anyone else from this era. Let Santana go out there and run around while Warlord uses his power game in short spurts. It is a formula that has worked forever and it worked well enough here, even in a short form match.

Survivor Series is coming. That's the Undertaker debut show, which always blows my mind. Look at this card and consider that three months later, you would have someone who has faced Rusev and AJ Styles.

Demolition, all three of them, won't say which two of them will be facing the Hart Foundation. Hint: it's probably the two holding the belts here. Either way, they aren't worried about facing the Legion of Doom after this, because they're just a bunch of impostors. This was just after Crush was added to the team so Ax could be written out due to what was thought to be a heart problem. In reality it was a bad allergic reaction to some kind of shellfish (not a joke) and he was fine soon enough.

Tag Team Titles: Hart Foundation vs. Demolition

Demolition (Crush/Smash) are defending in a 2/3 falls match and we cut to the back where the Harts say they're a bit surprised. They promise to win the titles because they are two Harts beating as one (always loved that line). Bret and Smash start but Neidhart comes in to knock an interfering Crush outside. Smash gets taken down into an armbar but knocks him away without much trouble, allowing Crush to come in instead.

Crush pulls a crossbody out of the air and slams Bret down but charges into a boot in the corner. It's off to Neidhart vs. Smash, with the former getting kicked in the back by Crush (that cheater). A clothesline out of the corner gives Neidhart a breather and he hands it back to Bret, which seems rather quick after Bret took a good bit longer beating.

Everything breaks down and Demolition is sent into each other so Crush falls outside. The backbreaker and middle rope elbow get two on Smash, with Crush dropping a leg for the save. With Neidhart down on the floor, the Demolition Decapitator finishes Bret for the first fall at 6:19.

Bret and Crush start the second fall and a choke shove drops Bret fast. The neck crank goes on for a bit but Bret is back up with the Hart Attack clothesline (minus the whole Hart Attack thing). The hot tag bring in Neidhart (despite Crush holding Bret's leg) for the house cleaning on Smash. There's the powerslam for two and everything breaks down with the Hart Attack hitting Smash.

Crush DIVES over and grabs the referee, who he carries around the ring. Believe it or not, yes that is a DQ and we're tied up at 10:40 (total). Why in the world wouldn't you just break up the cover there? That doesn't exactly make Crush look smart but Demolition was never the brightest team.

The third fall begins so here is Ax to hide underneath the ring like a villain should. Bret comes back with a sunset flip on Smash, followed by Neidhart powerslamming Bret onto him (that was awesome) for two. Then we get to the "REALLY?" part of the match as Ax switches with Smash (ignore the referee WATCHING HIM COME OUT FROM UNDER THE RING) and starts hammering away. Even when I was three years old, I never got how this was

supposed to make sense (Smash's face paint was even wiped off and Ax's was fresh).

Smash comes back out to double team Bret but cue the Legion of Doom to pull Ax from under the ring and break up another Demolition Decapitator. Neidhart slingshot shoulder blocks Crush into a cradle from Bret for the pin and the titles at 15:50 in one of the all time great feel good moments.

Rating: B+. A lot of this is nostalgia but I LOVE this match and always have. What I didn't get when I was a kid was that this was the culmination of a years long quest for the Harts to get the titles back and prove that they could do it without Jimmy Hart. The win felt like it meant something (Vince's call is perfect as you can feel him get happy on saying THREE) and it still holds up to this day. Heck of a match, but this was more about the emotion and it worked great.

Wrestlemania VII ad. I can still remember the phone number.

The Legion of Doom is happy because they have been waiting on Demolition. What a rush....for them. The Harts come in and say they'll fight anyone anytime anywhere no matter the odds. Quite the emotional burst there.

Sean Mooney is outside of Demolition's locker room where you can hear them ranting and raving about the Legion of Doom.

Queen Sherri brags about her win over Sapphire and laughs off the idea that there were "early sightings" of her earlier today. Sherri: "WHAT IS SHE: A UFO???" On top of that, Sherri has heard rumors about Sapphire that makes her think Sapphire might be the smartest person around here. Sherri: "THIS IS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE!!!"

Five minute intermission, thankfully without the countdown graphic included.

Gene Okerlund runs down the rest of the card and we see one of Bad News Browns' Harlem sewer rats.

Damien, Jake Roberts' snake, is in the shower.

Big Boss Man, who is guest referee for Brown vs. Roberts for no explained reason, doesn't mind snakes or rats.

Nikolai Volkoff, now very pro-America, is glad to be in a tag team with Jim Duggan. Volkoff describes Duggan as his idol and calls the team the American Express (as opposed to the Orient Express you see).

Earthquake, with Dino Bravo and Jimmy Hart, is ready to crush Hulk Hogan for good, just like he did to Tugboat. He might as well crush Big Boss Man as well! Bravo promises to take care of the Boss Man while Hart promises a double stretcher job. Earthquake also brings up Tugboat asking fans to send Hogan cards and letters to make him feel better.

1. That was designed to replenish the WWF's mailing list.
2. Each fan reportedly got a note signed (well, "signed" but close enough) by Hogan thanking them for their prayers.
3. That's brilliant, and it's the same thing the WWF did when the Islanders dognapped Matilda a few years earlier.

Jake Roberts is ready to turn Bad News Brown into a mouse.

A good chunk of these promos were not on the home video, likely for time.

Jake Roberts vs. Bad News Brown

Big Boss Man is guest referee and the fight starts before he gets to the ring. Jake tries a very early DDT but Brown slips out and kicks Jake down. Another DDT attempt doesn't work and they head outside, where Brown hits him in the ribs with a chair. That's good for a warning from Boss Man and Brown stomps away back inside. Roberts fights back with the snap jabs and the fans are already wanting the DDT. Brown counters it a third time, which Piper attributed to an oily head. More pounding on the floor ensues and that's enough to get Brown disqualified at 4:48.

Rating: D+. Nothing to see here as it felt like a match they advertised and then forgot to do anything which, which didn't make it much better. Throw in the Boss Man as the tacked on referee and there was only so much to get out of something like this. It just wasn't very good and I'm not

sure what they thought they had here.

Post match Brown goes to drop a leg on Damien but Boss Man makes the save. Brown beats on Boss Man but Jake grabs Damien and clears the ring, sending Brown out of the WWF for good. The rats were never seen, save for a closed crate at ringside.

Demolition rants about the numbers game in their match and swears vengeance, first on the Legion of Doom and then on the Harts.

It's time for Brother Love, who scared the heck out of me when I was a kid (and in modern times, scares me for entirely different reasons). Love asks if kids remember being told what to do when they were younger. Now they still need someone to do that because they are soft and weak. His guest is the man who can tell you what to do so here is Sgt. Slaughter. Er, make that DRILL Sgt. Slaughter this time.

Slaughter has been looking around and wants to find a great American. That's what he has found here, which is why he has The Great American Award for Brother Love. That makes him think of Nikolai Volkoff, who suddenly loves America. Slaughter isn't happy with that and declares war on Volkoff, because America has gone soft. If Saddam Hussein (or "who's on" as Slaughter pronounces it) declared war on us tomorrow our boys would be destroyed. Saluting ensues, as we have a new top heel.

Mr. Fuji and the Orient Express are ready for their match but we cut to Gene Okerlund, who has found Sapphire....who goes into a room and locks the door behind her. Nice one Gene.

Orient Express vs. Jim Duggan/Nikolai Volkoff

Piper doesn't quite buy the idea of Duggan and Volkoff being that bright. Before the match, Duggan and Volkoff belt out God Bless America, because of course they do. Duggan says God bless the troops and the Express attacks, only to be knocked outside without much trouble. The villains come back in with Tanaka bouncing off of Volkoff (Piper: "Yep, real dumb."). The US chants are on as Volkoff shrugs off a shot to the throat and brings Duggan in to clean house. Everything breaks down and the Express is sent into each other, setting up the three point clothesline

to finish Tanaka at 3:22.

Rating: D+. This was little more than a debut squash for Duggan and Volkoff and that is fine, though seeing the Express lose so quickly despite having some awesome matches with the Rockers was a little weird. It wasn't bad for a match there to play off of current events but it was fine for a quick one. As long as the WWF doesn't think Duggan and Volkoff are a big deal, it doesn't mean much.

Dusty Rhodes can't get into Sapphire's dressing room and has to go to the ring for his match. He'll be back.

Sean Mooney, standing on a ladder, talks to Randy Savage, who thinks the rumors about Sapphire are true. Savage talks about how the Founding Fathers weren't thinking about people like Dusty when they talked about the American Dream and this is a grave situation. Speaking of graves, the ring is where Macho is going to bury Dusty so DOWN THAT AISLE! Savage was kind of feeling it here.

Dusty Rhodes vs. Randy Savage

This is Macho King (with Queen Sherri) and Dusty is as serious as he has been in his WWF run. Hold on though as here is Ted DiBiase (with Virgil) on the platform to say his money can buy anyone or anything. He brings out Sapphire with a bag full of money (the trip around the world and the Cadillac seem more valuable, though I'd love one of those WWF gym bags) and talks about how money will get you whatever you want.

Dusty goes after them but Savage jumps him from behind. They head inside and the fight is on, with Dusty getting in some shots of his own. Savage is knocked outside and hides behind Sherri, who sneaks him the loaded purse. One shot is enough to knock Dusty cold for the pin at 2:14.

In the back, Ted DiBiase, Virgil and Sapphire leave in the limousine, with Dusty Rhodes giving chase to no avail. That always made me sad as it was a rare instance of evil flat out winning and Dusty not being able to do anything about it.

Hulk Hogan and the Big Boss Man are ready for revenge on Earthquake. They

dedicate the match to Tugboat and quite the beating that goes with the match.

Earthquake vs. Hulk Hogan

Jimmy Hart, Dino Bravo and Big Boss Man are here too and make no mistake about it: this is the show's real main event. Feeling out process to start and we get the big shove off out of the lockup. That does not great for Hogan and far better for Earthquake, with Hogan dropping backwards. After a quick chat with Boss Man on the floor, Hogan slugs away and tries a slam, only to hurt his back (it worked in the Andre match).

Some right hands and chops stagger Earthquake (and drop Bravo/Hart) until a big right hand puts Earthquake down. Everyone heads outside where the seconds get involved, including going inside. A double big boot drops Bravo and another one knocks Earthquake into the ropes as Piper wonders what the referee is thinking. The referee gets Boss Man out so Bravo and Earthquake can hit a double slam on Hogan.

The big elbow gives Earthquake two and we hit a Boston crab, which is quite the visual. Hogan tries to power out but for once gets smart and grabs the rope right next to him (you could tell things were different in 1990, as Hogan using a ROPE to escape is just hard to fathom). Bravo gets in a slam on the floor but Earthquake misses another big elbow. The slam still doesn't work for Hogan as Earthquake crashes onto him for two more to bang up the ribs even more.

We hit the bearhug (required) but Hogan fights out and tries....a crossbody???? What the heck man? Either way, Earthquake powerslams him down and hits the Earthquake. Then he does it again and I think you know what that means. The comeback is on, complete with the slam working this time. There's the legdrop but Bravo offers a distraction and Hart comes in to jump Hogan. Everything breaks down and it heads to the floor, where Hogan slams Earthquake onto (not through) a table and that's enough for the count at 13:12. Hogan jumping up and down in celebration always looked weird.

Rating: C+. I love Hogan but the magic was starting to fade. You can tell that there is a lot going on here to try to keep the energy up, but Hogan

just isn't as special as he once was. At the same time, the countout was lame and while Hogan slammed him, it was hardly some big win. They build Earthquake up very well, but there is only so much that can be done when he's Hogan's rebound feud.

Post match the beatdown is on with Earthquake choking Hogan. Boss Man hits Earthquake in the back with a metal stool and just annoys him, allowing Bravo to come in as well. In a great visual, Boss Man whips out the nightstick and is ready to go, which is enough for Earthquake and Bravo to bail. Hogan poses (after suggesting that Earthquake is a chicken) but Piper doesn't think Hogan won anything with the countout. Two things.

1. Piper getting on Hogan just feels right.
2. I know it's for the house show rematches, but dang that countout always felt kind of lame.

Rick Rude, now short haired and serious, promise to win the WWF Title in the cage tonight and get his statue outside of the Spectrum next to Rocky Balboa. Bobby Heenan explains the idea of a cage match and promises no sequels. Rude: "And there ain't gonna be no rematch!" I didn't know that was a Rocky reference until YEARS later. Of note: Heenan started this promo by saying "he's going to get that Intercontinental Title back", which is the kind of thing that he would be saying because he could do more than one thing at a time.

Dusty Rhodes is fine with Sapphire taking the money because he offered up his innocence to her and she paid him back in scorn (he used that line a lot in his career and I'm still not sure I get what it means). Now the fans are asking when he's going to get mad and even. He's coming for Ted DiBiase because...America can give him shelter from the storm? Ok then.

Lord Alfred Hayes explains how the cage is built for the main event.

Hulk Hogan talks about how there are new buildings being built around the world and they are all earthquake proof. Hogan is going to take that big fat dude (his words) around the world and beat him over and over until he is the #1 contender. That's not how you usually become #1 contender.

Anyway, Hogan has a fourth demandment: believe in yourself. For now though, he going to get a new nine foot surfboard (or gun as he calls it) and go to the beach to chase sharks, at least until he finds that TITLE wave. Then he pretends he's on a motorcycle and rides backwards out of frame. Hogan was a weird dude.

With welts on his back, Earthquake promises that it isn't over with Hulk Hogan and promises more pain next time. Dino Bravo and Jimmy Hart rant a lot too.

Ultimate Warrior: "Do you know what Bobby Heenan has in common with the Liberty Bell? One is cracked and the other is a ding dong." Would that be Ding or Dong? A lot of Founding Father references are made with Warrior promising to beat Rick Rude. The idea of the match is that Rude beat Warrior back at Wrestlemania V (which is never mentioned by name) so he could do it again here. In short, it didn't work and this is a really lame main event as a result.

WWF Title: Rick Rude vs. Ultimate Warrior

Rude is challenging in a cage and they start fighting on top of the cage. Warrior knocks him down and hits a top rope ax handle to take over, setting up the ram into the cage. Another ram into the cage drops Warrior and Rude goes up, where he has to kick Warrior away. For some reason Rude comes back down and keeps stomping away but it's too early for the Rude Awakening.

Warrior knocks him down but the splash hits knees, allowing Rude to hit the Rude Awakening. For no adequately explained reason, Rude goes up to the top of the cage for a right hand to the head. He STILL won't cover so he goes up again (Heenan: "WHERE ARE YOU GOING???") and gets punched out of the air this time.

Warrior goes for the door and gets it slammed on his head for two, as this just keeps going. Rude goes for the door as well but gets pulled back in, with the tights coming down in the process. This time Warrior pulls Heenan in and knocks him down, followed by an atomic drop out the door. Some clotheslines into the gorilla press lets Warrior escape (complete with hip swivel) to retain at 10:01.

Rating: D+. Not only was it a completely nothing match, but it was a match that didn't stick around for very long. In this case that might be a good thing though, as Rude was a lame duck of a challenger as you could have. There was no one for Warrior to face and it showed badly, making this a pretty weak main event. It might have worked as a quick house show main event, but (allegedly) headlining Summerslam? Not quite.

Warrior celebrates to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. Nostalgia plays a big role in this one but it's actually a rather good show. They keep things moving and important things take place, including Hogan's return and two title changes. It's still the very tail end of the Golden Era and now things can move forward into the new era. It's not a classic show, but it is a lot of fun and certainly memorable (at least for me), which is something I'll take every time.

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