

Royal Rumble 2008 (2022 Redo): SURPRISE!

Royal Rumble 2008

Date: January 27, 2008

Location: Madison Square Garden, New York City New York

Attendance: 20,798

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole Jonathan Coachman, Joey Styles, Tazz

I believe this is my fifth time reviewing this show but I'm always curious to see how much different it feels having recently watched the TV leading up to it. The show has been set for a long time now and that means we need to get on with the pay per view already. Of course there is the Royal Rumble, but the Raw World Title match between Jeff Hardy and Randy Orton is the real draw here. This show is summed up in three words: Hardy Could Win. It worked in 2008 and it's working again here. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks at the history of the Royal Rumble, with this year's being extra special because it's in Madison Square Garden. Works for me.

Ric Flair vs. MVP

Flair's career is on the line but MVP's US Title isn't. Before the match, Flair talks about how he has wrestled here throughout his career, starting all the way back in 1976. Flair thanks the fans for the respect they have given him throughout the years...and then MVP's music cuts him off. Feeling out process to start with Flair being driven back into the corner, meaning he needs to stop and think for a second.

A hammerlock sends MVP into the ropes so Flair chops him down. Back up and MVP kicks Flair in the head to take over, setting up a neckbreaker for two. Something like a crossface

chickenwing keeps Flair down but MVP is no Bob Backlund, meaning Flair is right back up. Flair goes for the knee but gets knocked into the corner, allowing MVP to strike him down. The running boot in the corner gives MVP three, albeit with Flair's foot on the ropes.

The distraction lets Flair roll him up for two so MVP grabs a butterfly suplex for two of his own. A superplex gets two more and the frustration is really setting in. Back up and they collide for a double knockdown, making me wonder if a draw would end Flair's career. Flair rolls him up a few times for two each before chopping away. That earns Flair a facebuster but the Playmaker is countered into a Figure Four to give Flair the win.

Rating: C. This wasn't so much about the drama, as Flair wasn't going to lose to MVP, even at a show like the Rumble. Instead, this was all about Flair getting in Madison Square Garden one more time and the match was built up over a few weeks. I'm not wild on the US Champion giving up clean, but there are bigger things afoot here.

Vince McMahon gives Hornswoggle a pep talk for the Royal Rumble, Finlay comes in and Vince suggests that Hornswoggle might turn on him.

And now, we meet Mike Adamle, who talks about Ric Flair's match and throws it to a package on Chris Jericho vs. JBL.

We recap Jericho vs. JBL, which is focused on JBL not liking Jericho's comeback and costing him the WWE Title. Then JBL took him out, setting up this showdown.

Chris Jericho vs. John Bradshaw Layfield

Jericho drives him into the corner to start so JBL begs off a bit. That doesn't work for Jericho, who takes him down and hammers away again. A missed clothesline lets Jericho grab the Walls, which sends JBL bailing to the rope. Jericho knocks him

outside for a baseball slide and then sends him into the steps for a bonus. Back in and JBL drops the bad throat across the top to take over.

As you might guess, JBL starts hammering Jericho down in the corner, albeit not as fast as he did in the past. The logical sleeper goes on for a bit, until Jericho fights up and hits his own hard clothesline. Back up and JBL sends him HARD into the post, with Jericho coming up busted open. Jericho pops back to his feet and sends JBL outside despite being COVERED in blood. One heck of a chair shot to the head knocks JBL silly but also hands Jericho the DQ.

Rating: C+. It was a bit of a slow match but they did a great job of setting up the violent ending. They were trying to keep the feud going here and Jericho being that busted open was a good way to accomplish just that. It was a violent fight and Jericho's chair shot made it even better. Not too bad here, albeit with the usual Jericho pacing issues.

Post match Jericho unloads on JBL and chokes him with the camera cable as JBL did to him a few weeks ago.

Ashley Massaro tries to talk to Maria but Santino Marella cuts her off, saying Maria isn't interested in Playboy. Right.

We recap Edge vs. Rey Mysterio for the Smackdown World Title. Edge won the title thanks to some assistance from Vickie Guerrero, his new girlfriend. Rey won a Beat The Clock Challenge by pinning Edge to earn the shot here, with the Rey/Guerrero family details making things even more complicated.

Smackdown World Title: Edge vs. Rey Mysterio

Edge, with Vickie Guerrero and the Edgeheads, is defending. They take their time to start with Edge grabbing a wristlock. Rey kicks his way out as the fans are WAY behind Edge, with Cole writing it off as a New York thing. Edge sends him to the

apron and hits a baseball slide to the floor, where the Edgeheads get THIS CLOSE to interfering. That's enough for an ejection, allowing Rey to come back with a springboard seated senton for two.

Rey tries to pick up the pace even further but gets knocked off the top for a crash. The half crab goes on to keep Rey in trouble before Edge shifts it to something like an ankle lock. Rey's leg is good enough to come back with an enziguri but the 619 is cut off. Back up and Rey manages to hit the sitout bulldog, setting up a kick to the head with the good leg for two.

Edge is staggered enough that Rey can knock him to the floor, setting up a sliding tornado DDT. Back in and Edge boots him down but Rey hits a quick 619. The top rope splash connects but Vickie gets out of the wheelchair to break up the pin. Rey doesn't get distracted and sets up another 619, which only hits the interfering Vickie. That's enough of a shock for Edge to spear Rey out of the air to retain.

Rating: B-. Another good one here, even if there was no chance of a title change here. Rey was little more than the designated victim for Edge as tends to be the case for the Royal Rumble. They had a pay per view worthy match though and Edge gets to move on to someone bigger with Wrestlemania on the way. Nice stuff here, given the circumstances.

Everyone checks on Vickie, who has to be put back in the wheelchair.

Mr. Kennedy comes in to see Ric Flair (in a towel) and condescendingly praise him for his win. Kennedy promises to win the Rumble and suggests he could retire Flair before Wrestlemania. Shawn Michaels comes in to suggest that Kennedy leave and then accidentally compares Flair to Kennedy. Flair knows Shawn is winning the Rumble tonight...and here's Batista for an awkward staredown. And HHH too, just to make it

weirder. HHH tells Ric to put his pants on and Shawn plugs his new shirt.

Here is Maria for the Kiss Cam. With that out of the way, Ashley Massaro comes out to offer Maria the Playboy spot but here is Santino Marella to say no for her. Oh and New York sports teams are awful. Maria thinks posing is a good idea so Santino has a present for her: Big Dick Johnson in New England Patriots (playing the New York Giants in the Super Bowl) gear. The women beat Johnson up to finish this one big announcement off.

Mike Adamle throws us to a package on Randy Orton vs. Jeff Hardy.

We recap Jeff Hardy challenging Randy Orton for the WWE Title. Hardy is on the roll of a lifetime and is ready to challenge for the title. This was one of the best builds WWE has done in a LONG time as it feels like Hardy could actually pull off the huge upset. This gets the big music video treatment and it still works very well.

Raw World Title: Jeff Hardy vs. Randy Orton

Orton is defending and Hardy's Intercontinental Title isn't on the line. They fight over a lockup to start until Jeff shoves him away to a rather strong reaction. Hardy grabs a headlock on the mat, which is reversed with a headscissors. That doesn't bother Hardy, who is right back with the legdrop between the legs for two. Orton gets clotheslined to the floor and there's the dropkick through the ropes to send him hard into the barricade.

They fight on the floor for a bit with Orton grabbing a belly to back suplex for two back inside. The circle stomp keeps Hardy in trouble and the choking has JR and King getting rather annoyed. Hardy fights up again and sends Orton over the top for a change, setting up the big dive off the apron. Back in and Jeff gets sent shoulder first into the post to put him

right back down, meaning Orton can grab the chinlock.

Hardy fights up after a good while and hits the Whisper In The Wind for a rather near fall. The Swanton is loaded up but Orton rolls outside before it can launch. That's fine with Hardy, who dropkicks Orton off the apron and hits a moonsault off the top to make it even worse. Back in and the Twist of Fate is loaded up but Orton counters into the RK0 to retain the title.

Rating: B-. It didn't have the hue moment of Hardy winning the title but it wound up being a pretty solid match with Hardy coming up just short. The problem is that they didn't have any major spot from Hardy but you could tell that he would be back. Hardy will have to get there somewhere, though he had to come up short here, despite an amazing buildup.

Rumble By The Numbers time!

569 wrestlers eliminated

36 wrestlers eliminated by Steve Austin

11 appearances by Shawn Michaels

11 wrestlers eliminated by Kane in 2001

3 Mick Foley personae to appear in the same Royal Rumble

2 feet that have to touch the ground

1 woman to enter the match, with Chyna

62:12 that Rey Mysterio lasted in 2006

2 seconds that Warlord lasted in 1990

3 Steve Austin wins

2 wins for the #1 spot, compared to 1 win for #30

#27 produces the most winners

73% of winners have gone on to win the title at Wrestlemania since 1993

Michael Buffer handles the Royal Rumble intro in a nice bonus.

Royal Rumble

90 second intervals. Undertaker is in at #1 and Shawn Michaels

is in at #2 so they're starting very fast here. Undertaker wastes no time in slugging away and even knocks Shawn onto the top. A running big boot only hits corner though and Undertaker winds up on the apron. That's fine for him as he catches a charging Shawn by the throat and drops him with a big boot. Santino Marella is in at #3 and lasts as long as you would expect. With Santino gone, Shawn tries to toss Undertaker but gets punched in the face again. Old School is broken up without much trouble and Great Khali is in at #4.

The fans start up the YOU CAN'T WRESTLE chants as Undertaker strikes away at Khali and actually choke shoves him out. Hardcore Holly is in at #5 and actually hangs on for a bit by slugging it out with Undertaker. That earns him a big boot to the face but Shawn goes to eliminate Undertaker, allowing Holly to fire off some chops in the corner. John Morrison is in at #6 and it's time for people to start pairing off. With nothing going on, Tommy Dreamer is in at #7 because we needed some ECW chants.

Dreamer does about what you would expect from him until Batista is in at #8 to keep the star power up. Dreamer breaks up the Undertaker vs. Batista showdown and is promptly eliminated (serves him right). Batista spears Morrison down as commentary thinks teaming up on Undertaker/Batista/Shawn makes sense. Hornswoggle is in at #9 and goes straight underneath the ring in a smart move. Batista hits another spear on Undertaker and Holly backdrops Shawn.

Chuck Palumbo is in at #10, giving us Undertaker, Shawn, Holly, Morrison, Batista, Hornswoggle (under the ring) and Palumbo. Morrison saves himself from elimination as the six in the ring pair off a bit. The banged up Jamie Noble is in at #11 and lasts all of thirty seconds before getting tossed by Palumbo. CM Punk is in at #12 and gets his face blasted off by Shawn's clothesline. Cody Rhodes is in at #13 and manages to dropkick Undertaker down as Punk knocks Palumbo out. Umaga is in at #14 and Spikes Holly out to keep the numbers even.

Snitsky is in at #15 and stomps on Cody in the corner until Miz is in at #16. Undertaker goes after Umaga (weird pairing) but can't get him out. Shelton Benjamin is in at #17 and snaps Miz and Morrison's throats on the top. Paydirt hits Punk but Shawn superkicks Shelton out in less than twenty seconds. Jimmy Snuka is in at #18 for the big nostalgia pop in the Garden. Punk goes straight for him because he wants to get knocked down by Snuka.

Speaking of Snuka, he got a big pop at #18, but Roddy Piper is in at #19 for a bigger one. Everything stops cold for the Piper vs. Snuka showdown and yeah ok this is awesome. Kane is in at #20 and tosses Piper and Snuka without much trouble. That leaves us with Undertaker, Michaels, Morrison, Batista, Hornswoggle (still underneath the ring), Punk, Rhodes, Umaga, Snitsky, Miz and Kane. Umaga breaks up a chokeslam to Shawn and it's Carlito in at #21.

Punk and Morrison almost toss Carlito out but he springboards back and catches Punk with a Backstabber. Mick Foley is in at #22 to start cleaning house but Umaga runs a lot of people over as well. Mr. Kennedy is in at #23 and hits some Mic Checks before kicking down a sitting up Undertaker. That's not cool with Undertaker who gives him a chokeslam and gets his own chance to clean house.

Big Daddy V is in at #24 and Undertaker knocks Snitsky out, only to get superkicked out by Shawn. Kennedy tosses Shawn immediately thereafter and the ring is suddenly a lot more empty. Shawn lands at Undertaker's feet but Undertaker beats up Snitsky to let off steam instead. Kennedy and Rhodes fight to the apron but it's Mark Henry in at #25. Henry and V start getting all dominant as Hornswoggle pops out to pull Miz to the floor for an elimination.

Chavo Guerrero is in at #26 and Punk is right on him as Kane boots Morrison out. Hornswoggle pops out again and gets grabbed by Henry and V. Cue Finlay with the shillelagh (I

guess in at #27) for the save and he leaves with Hornswoggle, which apparently counts as a double elimination. Elijah Burke is in at #28 as JR says Finlay was officially disqualified for the shillelagh. Batista is knocked outside (not eliminated) and Chavo dumps out Punk to keep their feud going.

HHH is in at #29 and this should clear some people out. There goes Rhodes and V follows him, setting up the HHH vs. Foley slugout. HHH sends Foley into Burke for the double elimination and Umaga misses a charge into the post. There's the Pedigree to Umaga....and none of that matters as JOHN CENA returns at #30 to an all time shocked reaction.

It wasn't clear if Cena was going to be back by Wrestlemania but since Cena doesn't seem to be a human, he's already back after two months instead of about six. That gives us a final grouping of Batista, Umaga, Kane, Carlito, Kennedy, Henry, Guerrero, HHH and Cena. After being shocked, the fans remember to boo Cena as he fires out Carlito, Henry and Chavo.

We get the big Cena vs. HHH showdown with HHH hitting the spinebuster but getting dropped by Umaga. Batista spears Umaga down and tosses Kennedy, followed by a running clothesline to get rid of Umaga. We're down to Kane, Batista, HHH and Cena, with HHH and Batista quickly tossing Kane. They stare at each other for a long time before the fight is on. Batista clotheslines them both down and spinebusters HHH but Cena backdrops his way out of a Batista Bomb.

That's enough for the elimination and we're down to HHH vs. Cena. That means some sign pointing before the BOO/YAY slugout begins. Cena hits the ProtoBomb and the Shuffle but the AA is blocked. The double clothesline leaves them both down for a needed breather for both them and the fans. Back up and another AA attempt is countered and HHH hits a DDT to take over. HHH can't throw him out and can't Pedigree him either, as Cena reverses into an AA for the win.

Rating: B. This match had a lot of the things that a great Rumble needs, ranging from surprises (especially the big one at the end) to star power throughout to a few fun moments like Foley, Piper and Snuka. The Cena return is what people remember about this match though and that is all it needed to be, as that was a genuine shock for a great moment. Quite good Rumble, with the Cena part being the big icing on the cake.

Cena celebrates a lot to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. The Rumble is the biggest one match show of the year and as it goes, so goes the rest of the show. The other four matches on here were good enough but there was nothing worth going out of your way to see. Cena being back breathes a lot of life into the show but it was still a good one even coming to that point. Not an all time classic, but there are far worse ways to spend two hours and forth five minutes.

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