

Wrestlemania XXI (2019 Redo): Where It All Begins Again Again

Wrestlemania XXI

Date: April 3, 2005

Location: Staples Center, Los Angeles, California

Attendance: 20,193

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole, Tazz

It's the big one as things have to change at some point in WWE. I'm curious to see how this show goes as I haven't seen the television leading up to it since the show aired so maybe the show will feel a little bit different. The theme is Wrestlemania Goes Hollywood, which has included some outstanding movie parody trailers. Oh and Batista and John Cena look more than ready to become the top stars in the company. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Battle Royal

Tajiri, William Regal, Rhino, Hurricane, Rosey, Maven, Simon Dean, Gene Snitsky, Chris Masters, Val Venis, Tyson Tomko, Sylvain Grenier, Rob Conway, Viscera, Hardcore Holly, Charlie Haas, Nunzio, Billy Kidman, Mark Jindrak, Funaki, Akio, Orlando Jordan, Doug Basham, Danny Basham, Heidenreich, Luther Reigns, Booker T., Paul London, Spike Dudley, Scotty 2 Hotty

This is your "get them all on the show" match, which was likely just the DVD extra. They're all in their show colored shirts with Eric Bischoff and Theodore Long at ringside. Before the bell, Hurricane gives Heidenreich his own mask so Heidenreich punches him in the face. Must be a villain. The fighting starts with Spike being sent to the steps as Hurricane makes the mistake of hammering away in the corner, making him the first elimination.

Reigns is out next as the ring is still very full. A bunch of the

cruiserweights hold Viscera down so Scotty can hit the Worm. That high level of missing the point could explain why they don't get on television very often. Masters doesn't like that line of thinking and dumps Scotty, Funaki, Spike and Kidman in a hurry. Haas is tossed as well as the ring is clearing out a bit.

Masters dumps Nunzio, though it might not have been over the top. With nothing else to do, Heidenreich destroys a turnbuckle and tears off his mask before clotheslining the heck out of Venis for an elimination. Dean and Grenier are out as well, followed by Rosey, all at Heidenreich's hands. Rhyno is out next and it's Dupree following him in a hurry. Both Bashams go out as the fans are behind Regal.

With about twelve people left, we get the always natural looking Raw vs. Smackdown showdown with Akio and Holly being tossed, followed by Regal to even things up a bit. Tajiri mists Heidenreich so the blind monster gets rid of London. Heidenreich and Tajiri fight on the apron until Snitsky gets rid of them, leaving us with Jindrak, Booker, Masters, Snitsky and Viscera.

Jindrak gets rid of Snitsky and hits the big left on Viscera...which staggers Jindrak so much that Masters can get rid of him. Nunzio does the "I'M STILL IN" deal, only to be tossed seconds later. Viscera crushes Booker in the corner but he's fine enough to low bridge the monster to the floor. The full nelson is broken up and a superkick gives Booker the win.

Rating: D+. It's kind of hard to get too annoyed at a match like this as the whole point is getting people on the show and therefore onto the DVD, which is a nice bonus for the talent. I know this isn't the most important match but it came and went fast enough and wasn't terrible. Assuming you can ignore the RAH RAH RAH Raw vs. Smackdown aspect, it's nothing too bad.

Lilian Garcia sings America the Beautiful. She'll have a job in WWE as long as she wants one for how good she can make that sound.

The Titantron is revealed with the red curtain coming up. They're nailing the theme this year.

We get a montage of the trailers, leading to the big reveal of the final trailer: Gladiator, featuring Steve Austin as Maximus. It's a cool idea and suitable casting but there were better trailers.

It's strange to see Wrestlemania in an arena. That's one of those things you'll probably never see again.

Eddie Guerrero vs. Rey Mysterio

Not a bad way to start and the red carpet in the aisle makes it even better. They're the Smackdown Tag Team Champions but Eddie isn't sure if he can beat Rey. There's no superhero outfit this year as Rey has Mexican/American flag inspired gear. Rey flips out of an armbar to start and hits a running knee but has to adjust the mask. A second armbar works a bit better for Eddie and but Rey pops up and climbs onto Eddie's shoulders.

The sunset flip is countered into a catapult to the floor but Rey switches places and teases a dive to take us to an early standoff. Eddie takes him down into a keylock to stay on the arm before sending Rey outside. Since he's a luchador as well, Eddie busts out his own dive to the floor, with the fans rather pleased with him. Rey adjust his mask again, as he isn't wearing the regular kind and the clasp is different, causing a lot of issues.

Back in and Eddie stays on the arm (instead of the leg because Eddie is smart, since working on Mysterio's leg hasn't worked well for most people) before switching over to a surfboard. That's broken up so Rey armdrags him to the floor, meaning the big corkscrew flip dive can take Eddie down. A backbreaker gives Eddie two though as Rey can't keep the momentum going. Rey gets back up and tries the 619 but walks into another backbreaker for two, allowing Rey to fix the mask again.

Three Amigos connect, with Rey holding his mask the whole time. The extra vision lets Rey avoid the frog splash and now the 619 connects. The West Coast Pop is countered into a hard powerbomb for two as they go back to the back. Eddie tries another powerbomb but this time Rey reverses into a hurricanrana for the pin and one final mask adjustment.

Rating: B-. I don't know how much the mask stuff messed with Rey but it seemed to be causing at least a bit of a problem. He had to mess with that thing probably a dozen times in a twelve minute match and it was becoming really noticeable. The idea here is to continue Eddie's descent into jealousy over not being able to beat Mysterio and that could be a heck of a story.

JBL and the Cabinet meets Evolution. HHH says Ric Flair is the wrestling god and maybe one day someone will believe that JBL is that good. A staredown over belt importance and a WOO to Orlando Jordan ends a terrifying prospect. Somehow, JBL and HHH only had one singles match ever against each other and it was on a random Raw in 2008. You would think they would have met at least a handful of times.

Adam Sandler and Rob Schneider are here.

Edge vs. Christian vs. Chris Jericho vs. Kane vs. Shelton Benjamin vs. Chris Benoit

Money in the Bank with Tyson Tomko out with Kane. Kane gets a cool entrance where the ladders on the set are on fire. Almost everyone goes after Kane in the aisle and a variety of double teams take him down. Christian tries to use the melee to bring in a ladder but Jericho slams it into his face. A springboard dropkick sends Edge into Benoit to knock them both off the apron, followed by Jericho's dive onto Edge.

Shelton hits the big running flip dive onto a bunch of people, with Kane adding the top rope clothesline to take down the same pile plus Benjamin for the wipe out. Back in and Jericho dropkicks a ladder into Kane but Benoit German suplexes Jericho, sending the ladder flying in a cool shot. Benoit's climb is cut off so he Crossfaces Kane and then Edge, the latter of which allows Kane to hit Benoit with the ladder.

To make it worse, Kane crushes Benoit's arm in the ladder over and over. Edge spears Kane down and it's the big reunion with Christian, who grabs his own ladder to smash Kane at the same time. Now it's Shelton coming in to send Christian outside and flapjack Edge into the ladder. Shelton and Jericho fight on top of the ladder until two more ladders are brought in (Lawler: "It's like open house at Home Depot!"), meaning it's everyone

but Kane on top at the same time.

Benoit, Jericho and Christian are knocked down, leaving Shelton to hit the exploder on Edge off the ladder for the huge crash. Jericho is left to go up but Shelton runs up a second ladder to clothesline Jericho off because he can do something like that. Christian knocks Shelton off the ladder as Kane returns from the short term death that afflicts wrestlers in ladder matches. Tomko comes in and kicks Kane in the face before helping Christian to the top in a bit of a call back to TLC II.

Kane is back up though and shoves the ladder over, sending Christian down to the floor and onto Tomko. Jericho and Kane knock each other off the ladder and everyone is down as we need a breather. With Kane down, Benoit (bleeding from the head) hits the Swan Dive off the ladder. Benoit goes up but has to headbutt Kane off but the arm is too banged up to get the briefcase. Edge blasts Benoit in the arm with a chair though and that's enough to pull down the briefcase for the win.

Rating: A-. Yeah this was great with more time for drama and fewer instances of having the people laying around forever because there are too many people in the match at the same time. Edge winning is the best call as no one has been chasing the title like him and now he can steal the title down the line. It's a heck of a fight though with a bunch of awesome spots and stuff that kept the fans interested without many dead spots. Great stuff and an awesome way to debut the concept.

Here's the still injured Eugene, whose music doesn't start until halfway down the aisle. This is his second favorite Wrestlemania moment every, after the midget army getting together to fight off King Kong Bundy at Wrestlemania III (Hillbilly Jim was included as well, and he spent a good hour talking about it during his Hall of Fame speech). Cue Daivari and Muhammad Hassan to complain about not being on the show (that they're on) and rant about the prejudice in Los Angeles.

Hassan is ready to make his own Wrestlemania moment and jumps Eugene, setting up the camel clutch. Cue Hulk Hogan or the REAL AMERICAN save, including a double noggin knocker. Hassan gets sent outside so Daivari can hit Hogan with a chair. Since that doesn't work, it's a big boot and

another toss to the floor so the posing can commence. Hogan even gets to do the big pose in front of the huge American flag on the stage. Yeah it's old hat but I'll always be a Hulkamaniac so this made me smile.

We recap Randy Orton vs. Undertaker. Orton won the World Title last fall but lost it in a hurry and has been on a slow downward spiral since. He needs to get back on track so he's going after Undertaker and the Streak while turning heel in the process. Orton's dad Bob is helping him a bit, because Orton has slid far enough that he needs that kind of help.

Randy Orton vs. Undertaker

The druids with the torches are here so you know it's serious. Undertaker glides to the ring for a pretty cool entrance, which goes much faster than usual for a bonus. Orton comes out second for some reason, albeit with his own cool entrance of pyro raining down behind him as he poses with the still awesome Burn In My Light playing. After some early dodging, the first right hand gets Orton launched into the corner.

The dropkick out of the corner gets two and Orton backdrops him for a bump you don't see from Undertaker that often. The early RKO attempt is shoved over the top as Undertaker is starting a bit slowly here. Old School connects but Orton is back up with a dropkick to the floor to take over. Undertaker's running DDT gets two and Snake Eyes connects. The ensuing big boot is cut off with a running elbow though, sending the fans straight into a LET'S GO UNDERTAKER/RANDY SUCKS chant.

The slugout goes to Undertaker and we hit the dragon sleeper as Undertaker busts out some different stuff for a change. Orton breaks out and grabs a sleeper, which doesn't please the crowd. The counter before Orton can take him to the ground is more appealing but Orton is back with a powerslam.

For some reason, Orton hammers away in the corner, meaning he has to escape the Last Ride. The referee gets bumped though and here's Bob with a cast shot to Undertaker's head for the close two. Undertaker boots Bob off the apron and grabs the chokeslam, which is reversed into the RKO in midair (one of my favorite counters ever) for two and a big sigh of relief from the fans. For reasons of general cockiness, Orton tries his

own Tombstone, which is reversed into the real thing to make Undertaker 13-0.

Rating: B-. It's a good match but it never came close to that higher level. It would take a little longer for Undertaker to get that much better at Wrestlemania so for now it's just a good one. Orton was trying here and looked better than he has in a long time, though aside from that one RK0, he never felt like a real threat here. Still though, one hot near fall is better than none and it wasn't bad by any stretch.

We recap Trish Stratus vs. Christy Hemme. It's the annual Playboy match as we're now supposed to believe that Christy can wrestle and isn't just there because of her looks. Lita has been training Christy and is more interesting than anything Christy has been doing. Keep in mind that Christy isn't at fault here. She isn't a wrestler and is being thrown into a match because she won a modeling contest. That's on WWE, not Christy.

Women's Title: Trish Stratus vs. Christy Hemme

Trish is defending and Christy has Lita with her. The bell rings and Trish drops to the mat but kicks Christy away in a rather heelish move. They head outside with Trish sending her into the steps, followed by some chops in the corner back inside. The Chick Kick misses and Christy hits one of her own as the fans are just gone for this.

Christy does the splits on top to set up a sunset flip for two, only to have Trish spear her down. We get the BORING chants as Trish stops to yell at Lita, allowing Christy to start in with the kicks. The reverse Twist of Fate and a rollup give Christy two each but Trish has had it. That means the Chick Kick to retain the title and end Christy's wrestling run.

Rating: D-. Yeah what else were you expecting? Trish was wrestling herself here as Christy was only good for some tumbling and that Twist of Fate. The women's division is all but dead at this point and it's likely going to be a long time before things get better. Christy was trying here but had no business in this spot.

We recap Kurt Angle vs. Shawn Michaels. Angle was annoyed that Shawn eliminated him from the Royal Rumble and beat him up, setting off the big feud. Kurt is annoyed that people were talking about Shawn in 1996 when Angle was an Olympic champion. Now Angle wants to prove that he is the better man on the biggest stage. Shawn is down with that because he's Shawn Michaels and it's Wrestlemania. This is more or less WWE saying "yeah it's going to be a classic and everyone knows it."

Various celebrities are here.

Kurt Angle vs. Shawn Michaels

They stare at each other both before and after the bell until Shawn slaps him in the face. That makes Angle take him to the mat and Shawn is completely outclassed there. A headlock takeover works a bit better for Shawn as the fans are behind Angle for a bit of a surprise. The headlock stays on for a good while as they probably have a lot of time here. Shawn switches over to a short arm scissors, allowing Angle to power out ala Bob Backlund (his old mentor).

Shawn is right back with the headlock but this time Angle powers up and takes him into the corner. The ankle lock is quickly broken up and it's Shawn with a Cactus Clothesline to put them both on the floor. The announcers' table is loaded up but Angle hits an Angle Slam into the post to take something out of Shawn. A suplex gives Angle two and it's off to the bodyscissors to stay on the ribs/back.

The belly to belly gets two and it's a reverse chinlock with a knee in Shawn's back. Angle's belly to belly superplex is broken up but Shawn misses the top rope elbow. Shawn is fine enough to backdrop Angle to the floor and he's crazy enough to hit a high crossbody to the floor with the knee possibly hitting Angle in the face. Angle gets back up and teases the German suplex off the apron to make the fans a little nervous.

A low blow gets Shawn out of trouble and that means the springboard spinning splash onto Angle onto the announcers' table for less of a pop than you might have expected, mainly because the table doesn't break. They head back in for the slugout into Shawn's forearm and nipup so things can pick up again. Sweet Chin Music (way too early) is countered

into the ankle lock, setting up the big crawl to the rope. Angle gets it again but this time Shawn reverses into a rollup for two.

Another Sweet Chin Music attempt is countered into the Angle Slam for two as frustration is setting in. In another awesome moment, Angle pulls his straps up so he can pull them right back down again because you know it's serious. The moonsault misses though (probably spent too much time with the straps) so Shawn goes up, only to get caught in the super Angle Slam for two, meaning Angle looks ready to cry at the kickout.

Angle talks a bunch of trash so Shawn snaps off Sweet Chin Music to shut him up. That gets a very delayed two and they both need a breather. Angle picks the ankle into the ankle lock as he's right back up but this time Shawn can't kick away. Shawn fights everywhere but finally gets pulled down into the grapevine for the tap (after a nearly goofy amount of time).

Rating: A+. Yeah what else do you want here? They told an outstanding story with Shawn going with the natural talent but Angle just wanting it that much more and turning up the intensity to a level Shawn couldn't reach. It made Shawn look like he couldn't beat Angle on his best night, all while putting in an instant classic. These two went back and forth with one big spot after another and Angle took away a lot of Shawn's strength by working on the back. Check this one out if you haven't in a while as it's worth seeing again.

Fabulous Moolah and Mae Young are here.

It's time for Piper's Pit (and I think there was an edit in there as the set was put together in the blink of an eye). Piper thanks the fans for the Hall of Fame but wants to get down to business. He wanted the meanest and baddest man in WWE so his guest is Steve Austin. Cue Austin (with a glass breaking transition as we cut to the stage), with JR saying that he's back at Wrestlemania. He hasn't missed one since 2000 so that's not the biggest accomplishment. Piper asks if Austin is the rebel and slaps him in the face so Austin calls him an SOB and returns the slap. Piper: "I kind of like you."

With that out of the way, Piper talks about respecting Austin but gets

cut off by the WHAT chants, which he doesn't seem to understand. Piper takes issue with one thing: he was ticking Vince McMahon off when Wrestlemania didn't even have a number. Austin and James Dean have nothing on Piper when it comes to being a rebel. Austin runs down Piper's appearance and they get in each other's faces, allowing Piper to quote Cool Hand Luke about a failure of communication.

Cue Carlito, with Piper and Austin accusing each other of bringing him out. Piper: "I'll get back to you." Carlito accuses both of them of arguing like girls, before declaring them both non-cool. Piper: "Who the h*** are you? You look like Alfalfa." Carlito wants the two of them out of here and loads up the apple but Piper takes it away.

It's Carlito taking the spit this time so Carlito hits him in the face as Austin laughs. Bored of that, Austin beats Carlito up and Piper sends him outside. Beer is consumed until Austin Stuns Piper. This completely missed as Piper and Austin didn't have anything to say to each other. Carlito getting to be out there was a nice few moments for him but this was all about the legends, who didn't need to be there.

It's immediately time for the sumo match with a much harder cut to Cole and Tazz. They had to edit something out of there and we get a VERY long crowd shot during the next entrance. That was probably to remove the ropes, but it still felt like something was cut.

Upon further review, they aired the You Talking To Me trailer here and announced it as winning the Best Overall Trailer award. They've aired that on Raw and Smackdown, so why cut it here?

Akebono vs. Big Show

They do the full traditional opening as the fans are really not interested in this one. We finally get going, they slap each other, pull at the gear a bit, Show lifts Akebono and spins him around, and then Akebono wins. This didn't work again as it came and went as it just wasn't the right thing for a show like Wrestlemania. Akebono never wrestled for WWE again and I don't know if he ever appeared again so I'm not sure what the thinking was here.

We recap John Cena vs. John Bradshaw Layfield for the Smackdown World Title. It's built around a culture clash with JBL being the old, rich traditionalist while Cena lives by his own rules and cares about the people. Cena won a tournament to get the shot so JBL talked about how people like Cena didn't deserve to be champion. He couldn't get Cena to go too far though and Cena is ready to explode here.

Smackdown World Title: John Cena vs. John Bradshaw Layfield

JBL is defending and gets a police escort into the arena. Just to show off, we get a shower of JBL dollars, which are always a nice touch. They trade shoulders to start with JBL getting the better of it (the big boot out of the corner probably helped a bit). A suplex gives JBL two and he chokes Cena on the ropes for a bit. Back up and Cena is fine with getting into a slugout but JBL catches him with a Ron Simmons style spinebuster. A neckbreaker and some clotheslines stay on Cena's neck, followed by a sleeper to do something similar enough.

Cena slips out and it's a double clothesline to keep up the slow pace. JBL sends him outside for another neckbreaker before going up top for some reason. That earns him a slam out of the air but Cena can't follow up. Cena starts his comeback but the fans aren't quite thrilled. The Shuffle gets some energy flowing and after ducking the Clothesline From JBL, the FU gives Cena his first World Title out of nowhere.

Rating: D. Very bleh match here as there was no drama and the match just ended out of nowhere with Cena shrugging off the first ten minutes and winning with very little drama. I know the match itself doesn't matter that much but Cena wasn't ready to carry something like this and JBL was never capable of carrying something like this, leaving us with a very underwhelming match.

That's also the end of JBL's long title reign and really, it was a lot better than I remember. JBL can talk very well and while his matches weren't great, it didn't come close to dragging as a lot of people (myself included) remember. Maybe it was knowing when it was going to end but I didn't mind this nearly as much as I expected to. JBL winning the title in the first place was a big stretch but he held it a lot better

than I would have guessed.

Hall of Fame video. Hogan and Piper were long overdue. Heenan on Iron Sheik's speech: "WHAT THE H*** DID HE SAY???"

Gene Okerlund brings out the year's class:

Nikolai Volkoff (sure why not)

Iron Sheik (just don't let him talk...or maybe let him talk...it could go either way)

Paul Orndorff (belongs in for 1986 alone and is smart enough to point at Miss Jackie)

Bob Orton (always good for a solid performance and still selling the injury from earlier)

Jimmy Hart (yep, and comes off as one of the nicest guys ever in wrestling)

Roddy Piper (would have headlined almost any other class)

Hulk Hogan (odds are we're not here without him)

We recap the Raw World Title match. HHH has dominated the World Title scene for a long time and has used Evolution to help him hold onto the title. Batista has proven to be unstoppable and then won the Royal Rumble. HHH tried to talk him into going to Smackdown but Batista overheard the evil planning, sending Batista onto a path towards Wrestlemania and the title. This isn't the hardest result to figure out and the fans are begging to see Batista take the title away from HHH for good.

Raw World Title: HHH vs. Batista

HHH is defending and has Ric Flair with him, plus Motorhead plays him to the ring, just in case you thought Batista was cooler. I mean, you can barely understand the words because Lemmy butchers it in a great Brutus Beefcake impression but HHH rising up through the stage makes up for it a bit. Batista doesn't get much of a pop, mainly due to the lack of the

famous band performing his music.

The early power lockup lets them drive each other to the ropes but it's only good for a standoff. They do it again with HHH's running shoulder having no effect other than waking HHH up a bit. Another shoulder drops Batista but he's right back up with something close to a powerslam. Batista hits a backdrop, only to have HHH knock him outside to cut the momentum off again.

Flair's distraction lets HHH send Batista into the steps and Flair gets in some choking with the jacket. Back in and HHH gets two off a suplex, setting up more Flair choking. Whatever emotion the fans had for Batista after that HHH entrance is long gone now as HHH has beaten him down for about seven of the eight minutes the match has been going so far. Batista slugs away but walks into the spinebuster, because of course HHH needs to hit a spinebuster as he dominates Batista in the biggest match of Batista's career.

A backdrop breaks up the Pedigree attempt but HHH is RIGHT BACK with the facebuster, leaving him on defense for all of three seconds. HHH goes up and gets clotheslined out of the air to no reaction as the fans are gone. They're smart enough to realize that HHH is going to cut Batista off again and, as expected, Batista charges into a big boot in the corner just a few seconds later. Batista sends HHH over the corner, only to have HHH whip him into the steps.

The Pedigree onto the steps is countered into a catapult into the post and we've got some blood. Back in and it's time to hammer on the cut as the fans finally have something to cheer about. The big running clothesline in the corner rocks HHH and a powerslam gets two as there isn't quite the energy in the offense that you would expect. It feels like they're just doing stuff to fill time until the ending instead of building something up.

Batista sends him outside but goes after Flair, allowing HHH to grab the chair, which hits the referee by mistake. Flair's belt shot is countered with a spinebuster but HHH's belt shot gets two. The fans react to the kickout and Batista hits the spinebuster for the big reaction. That's too

much cheering for HHH's liking so he hits Batista low. Batista blocks the Pedigree with raw power though and hits something like White Noise. The Batista Bomb finally makes Batista champion.

Rating: C. It was miles better than Cena vs. JBL but egads this didn't do Batista any favors. This was more about giving HHH a big sendoff as champion than making Batista look like a star and...I can't say I'm surprised. Batista has looked so dominant and smart for the last six weeks that HHH probably couldn't help himself from cutting him off. HHH did put him over, but it could have been a lot stronger without HHH beating him up and outsmarting him for the first half of the match. Much like the previous match though, it's all about what comes next rather than what happened here, but HHH made sure to make himself look good.

The big celebration and highlight package wrap things up.

Overall Rating: B. Much like last year, this really needed forty five minutes to an hour trimmed off (and again it's easy to see what should be gone) to make it great. As it is it's quite good but there are a lot of times where it felt like it was dragging. The two World Title matches were outclassed by Money in the Bank and Shawn vs. Angle (not exactly shocking on either front) but they got the endings right and aside from the sumo match and Piper's Pit (which wasn't that long), only the very short women's match is bad (and that has various other positives).

What we got here was a strong Wrestlemania, but it needed some time trimmed off to really make it great. That being said, this is still far better than the five hour monstrosities we get now. It's a completely watchable, at times great and very important show though, meaning it feels like Wrestlemania. The streak of good Wrestlemanias continues, though the show getting longer isn't the most encouraging sign. Check out the ladder match and Shawn vs. Angle if you have the time though as they're worth a second look (or nineteenth look in some cases).

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