

Wrestler of the Day – January 12: Killer Bees

Today we look at a tag team due to one of its members (B. Brian Blair) having a birthday: it's the Killer Bees.

The mid 1980s were as good of a period as there has even been for tag team wrestling, which is a shame for the Bees. They were an incredibly talented team that never got a chance on top because there were just too many other great teams ahead of them. As luck would have it, there's a perfect night to showcase the Bees' talent. On March 15, 1987, there was a one night tag team tournament in Toronto with the winners getting a tag title shot against the Hart Foundation later in the night. We'll be looking at the Bees' matches throughout the evening.

First Round: Kamala/Sika vs. Killer Bees

Sika is more famous for being in the Wild Samoans. Has Kamala ever actually won anything? I don't remember a thing that he actually accomplished. The camera angle is odd at this show as it's from an angle and the ring is kind of up on a platform if that makes sense. The crowd is kind of small too. The ring looks small too. Valiant isn't a good talker but he's energetic. Sika and Brunzell start. For some reason Kamala starts climbing the ropes. Ok then.

No clue why the heels are teaming together. Oh apparently they're a semi-regular tag team. As always the idea of them registering for a tag team is very funny. Their manager, the Grand Wizard, would be replaced by Mr. Fuji, who Shawn Michaels LOVES. They get a double slam on Kamala which was kind of cool. We get to the formula stuff here as Blair, the less talented of the faces, gets beaten down a lot.

That ends though due to the first instance of something I'm sure you'll hear a lot of tonight: heel miscommunication. A hot tag to Brunzell and a quick dropkick gets the win for

them. On replay, you can see how awesome that one was. He kicked Sika right in the freaking face.

Rating: C+. Not bad for an opener at all. They used your standard formula here but at an accelerated pace. To be fair though, the heels are pretty much crap here though and that's hurting things. Bees were their usual solid selves, but they were being held down here by bad opponents.

Semi-Finals: Killer Bees vs. Paul Orndorff/King Kong Bundy

Bundy says that they should just get the titles now. Thanks for that Mr. Bundy. The Bees have their trademark masks which is a nice face acting heelish move. There's no way to tell them apart at this point so I'm not going to try. Again, why is Bundy getting cheered? Apparently Brunzell is in the ring at the moment. This is another quick match as the heels beat down one of the Bees but as they brag to the crowd the Bees do the switch. A rollup ends it.

Rating: D+. Again, just nothing to talk about here. This was maybe 3 minutes long and I have no idea how this is going to end up. This wasn't great or anything at all but the ending sets up the showdown with Demolition, which fits the power vs. speed idea but it doesn't leave many surprises for who is going to win.

Finals: Killer Bees vs. Demolition

So it's a 32 minute final. Yeah I'm thinking NO on that one. Smash and Brunzell start us off as we're talking about Elvis for no apparent reason. This is very reminiscent of all the other matches, with nothing of note happening and this just being your standard match that could have been on a regular TV show. And this is the final match right? Got it. Demolition is dominating of course and here come the masks. Gorilla said those exact words but I typed them first. I BEAT MONSOON!!! And a sunset flip off the top by Brunzell ends it? Ok then.

Rating: C+. A bit better but still nothing at all to write home about, let alone write a review of 23 years after it happened. Oh never mind. Anyway, nothing great here at all but it could have been much worse I guess. That gives us the Bees vs. the Harts for the titles, in a match that happened about 500 times by Brunzell's guesses.

Tag Titles: Killer Bees vs. Hart Foundation

Well ok then. Apparently this is the reward for the win. Better than nothing I guess. The Harts try to walk off since the Bees are wearing their masks but they're declared legal. This should be a good match if nothing else. The masks are removed and we stall some more. Apparently the match has been signed already. That's impressive since the other match ended like 8 minutes ago. Those are some fast lawyers.

Danny Davis is with them and isn't wrestling tonight yet he's wearing the shorts anyway. Ok then. Anvil and Brunzell start us off. Anvil takes his straps off at the very beginning for no adequately explored reason. These four always had solid chemistry together and this doesn't seem to be any exception. A fan jumps the railing for reasons of genuine idiocy. Brunzell runs into Anvil and everyone is down.

We get a lot of standard tag stuff, such as the hot tag with the referee not looking and the slam getting dropkicked for a cover for a long two. The masks go back on and we get a double sleeper. Brunzell gets a small package on Hart but Davis turns it over, allowing Hart to get the pin and keep the titles. Post match the Bees beat up Davis to an ERUPTION.

Rating: B-. By far the best match of the night. I think Brunzell once said these two teams wrestled between 300 and 600 times and it shows. This is one of their weaker matches but it's still pretty decent stuff, given that they had like 8 minutes to do it in. Not great, but good enough.

Since this is from a very old review and the writing sucks, here's a match that showcases the tag team division far better. It's from the first Survivor Series.

Team Hart Foundation vs. Team Strike Force

Hart Foundation, Bolsheviks, Demolition, Dream Team, Islanders

Strike Force, British Bulldogs, Killer Bees, Young Stallions, Fabulous Rougeaus

The rules here are that if one member of a team is eliminated, both members are out so it's still just five eliminations needed. Strike Force recently stunned the Harts for the titles. I think you should know every team here. The Dream Team is Greg Valentine and Dino Bravo and the Stallions are Jim Powers and Paul Roma. I'm a big Strike Force fan so it's good to see the fans pop loudly for them.

I've seen this show many times as it was one of my favorite tapes but I've never figured something out: for this and the main event, the lights are turned down. Why would that be the case? It's clearly darker in the arena now and it's not a dome with sunlight coming in or anything. I've never gotten that. Volkoff and Martel start things off. There are so many people on the apron that you can't see most of the ring from a standard camera shot.

Volkoff powers him down to start before bringing in Zhukov. Since Zhukov is pretty much worthless, Martel beats him up and brings in Santana for the forearm out of nowhere for the quick pin. Santana's reward for the pin: he gets to fight Ax. Ax does his pounding but knocks Tito into the corner and it's off to Jacques Rougeau who speeds things up with a jumping back elbow to take over.

Dino Bravo comes in and the good guys start speeding up their tags. I'm sorry for all of the play by play in this but when you have 18 guys in a match there isn't much room for analysis or anything else. After Bravo gets beaten up by about five different guys we wind up with Smash vs. Dynamite and the Bulldog (Dynamite) gets caught in the heel corner. Well actually it would be the heel side of the ring because they don't all fit

in one corner but corner sounds better.

Off to Haku and they chop it out before Dynamite tags in a Killer Bee who tags in the other Killer Bee. Neidhart comes in and gets his legs stretched by Brunzell and Roma. Back to Smash and then Ax who beat on the (somehow) future Horseman. I'm not listing a lot of the tags as there are probably five of them a minute and there's no point in listing off stuff like "Ax comes in and hits Roma once before tagging back out."

Roma tags in Powers who gets beaten down just as fast as Roma did, so it's off to Jacques again. Not that it matters much as Jacques misses a cross body and Smash gets a quick pin. That's good as we're now down to sixteen guys left in the match. Off to Dynamite vs. Tama but Powers comes in, only to hesitate and gets his head taken off by a clothesline. Neidhart comes in and puts him in an over the shoulder powerbomb position as Haku drops a double ax (is there a single ax?) to the chest.

Off to Roman who gets beaten up by Ax and then Valentine. The Stallions are jobbers for all intents and purposes but they were great at selling so there was a point to having them around. Bravo comes in and hits a gutwrench suplex for two. Roma crawls over and brings in a Killer Bee who tags out to Dynamite almost immediately to face Smash. Smash fires off something similar to Sheamus' ten forearms but shoves the referee, drawing the DQ to knock out Demolition. Notice that they kept Demolition VERY strong here and didn't let them get pinned.

Bret immediately comes in and piledrives Dynamite for only two. Jesse immediately starts singing Bret's praises as he was known to do. Bret misses a charge and hits the post shoulder first and it's off to Powers again to face Tama. Tama misses a Vader Bomb and there's the tag to Martel. Rick cleans house but when he puts the Boston Crab on he's too close to the ropes and Neidhart gets a tag.

Rick gets away enough to bring in Santana who hits the forearm almost immediately for two. The saving shot to the back of Santana's head by Bret is enough for Neidhart to get a pin and eliminate the champions. To recap, we have the Harts, the Dream Team and the Islanders vs. the Bulldogs, the Stallions and the Bees. At least now things can slow down a

lot. Haku hits a HIGH dropkick on Powers as Jesse talks about his great great grandfather coming over on the Mayflower.

Valentine comes in and does Arn Anderson's jump in the air and get crotched spot. Anvil (Neidhart for you schmucks out there) comes in and hot shots Powers followed by a superkick from Haku. Off to Valentine who has his suplex countered but still blocks the tag by bringing in Hitman. Bret suplexes Powers but Roma is still able to get the tag somehow. Back to Valentine who comes off the middle rope with a shot to the back for two.

In something you rarely see, Bret whips Roma into the ropes and knocks Valentine off the apron. Bret misses a dropkick and there's the tag to Dynamite. A belly to back gets two for the Kid and it's off to Roma which is a pretty questionable move given the beating he's taken. Off to Haku vs. Blair as Roma was only in for a few seconds. Davey comes in and it's power vs. power. Make that power vs. Powers but Jim misses a corner charge and Haku tags Anvil.

Powers dives away from Bret and it's time for Davey Boy vs. Bret in a Summerslam 92 preview. Davey uses a perfect gorilla press on Hart and hits the powerslam for two on Haku. Dynamite tries a middle rope headbutt (notice all the similarities between Dynamite and Benoit. Benoit basically cloned himself after Dynamite) on Haku but knocks himself silly, allowing Haku to superkick him for the elimination.

It's 3-2 now and Roma immediately charges in with a dropkick for two. Off to Bravo who misses an elbow and it's off to Powers. Why won't they tag the Bees already? Valentine Hammers away on Powers as do both Harts. Valentine comes in for a second before handing it off to Bravo again. Dino hits his side suplex but tags off to Valentine for the Figure Four, which is countered by a kick to the back. Off to Roma who sunset flips Valentine off the top to make it 2-2 (Stallions/Bees vs. Islanders/Harts).

The Bees double team Anvil in a match that by their own words probably happened 300 times over the years. Brunzell hits a high knee to the face for two and it's off to Bret who does about as well. Tama comes in and

takes out Roma and it's off to Haku. Haku misses a legdrop and it's back to Brunzell. Brunzell hiptosses him into the heel corner for some reason and Bret comes back in. Roma gets two off a middle rope fist but Hart comes right back with a belly to back suplex.

The Islanders hit a double headbutt and this referee counts SLOW. Haku pounds on Roma and hits a dropkick which is rather impressive for a guy his size. It's not quite as impressive as Anvil doing a dropkick of his own (literally 2 seconds after Monsoon says he'd like to see Neidhart try one) though. Bret comes back in and Roma slides between Bret's legs and tags in Brunzell.

Brunzell tries to slam Hart but Tama dropkicks Bret's back. Brunzell rolls through and gets a fast pin to eliminate the Harts and get us down to 2-1. Tama hooks a nerve hold on Brunzell followed by a shoulderbreaker from Haku. That gets two so Haku puts on a nerve hold of his own. Now Tama puts on ANOTHER nerve hold. To be fair we're over half an hour into this so the guys are likely getting tired.

Brunzell tries a sunset flip but there's no strength in it at all and he only gets two. He FINALLY gets a tag off to Powers who tags in Roma for a powerslam for two. Things start to break down a bit and the Bees being in the ring allow the Islanders to double team Roma a bit. Roma escapes enough to tag Blair but Tama kicks him before Blair can even get in. Tama misses an elbow and it's off to Brunzell again for some reason. He can barely get Tama over for a backdrop but the signature dropkick gets two. Everything breaks down and Blair puts on his mask (it was a thing the Bees did to cheat) and sunset flips Tama for the pin.

Rating: C-. This match just kept going on and on and it was kind of exhausting to sit through. It runs nearly forty minutes and by the end there were no combinations we hadn't seen already. You could easily cut out fifteen minutes of this match and it would have improved greatly. If you like tag wrestling, find a copy of this NOW but otherwise be ready to fast forward a lot. It's not a bad match or anything but man alive is it long.

As I said, the Bees were one of the best teams to never hold the tag

titles. They just came up at the wrong time and didn't have a chance with teams like the Bulldogs, the Harts, Demolition and Strike Force out there getting all of the glory. Still though, they were very exciting to watch and could put on clinics with anyone. Also here's a bit of trivia for you: Blair faced Hulk Hogan in Hogan's first ever professional match.

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Monday Nitro – August 24, 1998: An Actually Good Ending

Monday Nitro #151

Date: August 24, 1998

Location: United Center, Chicago, Illinois

Attendance: 17,094

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Bobby Heenan, Tony Schiavone, Larry Zbyszko

We're closing in on Fall Brawl and the main event is coming into focus a little bit more. The main story coming into tonight ties into the PPV as Warrior is promising to begin a revolution tonight, whatever that means. He's officially on DDP's team to face Hogan and Hart for the Black and White and whoever is on the Wolfpack's team. This three team stuff with one winner idea for WarGames is annoying. Let's get to it.

We open with a black limo arriving with the Black and White coming out. It's just Hogan, Bischoff, Liz and Disciple here and we get a long tracking shot of them coming all the way into the arena. Once they're finally in the ring, Eric holds up a pen and says it's what lets him keep in charge of WCW and the NWO. He ran Vader and Johnny B. Badd out of WCW

and he'll keep anyone he wants out as well.

Hogan takes the mic and talks about how he owns the world of wrestling and is more powerful than anyone. He can't wait to get in the ring at WarGames and take everyone out one by one. Hogan promises to take the title back from Goldberg for awhile and that's that. Shortest opening segment in a long time.

Opening sequence.

Mike Enos vs. Wrath

Enos fires in some knees in the corner but Wrath shrugs them off and chops away in the corner. They head outside with Enos being sent into the barricade and chopped even more. Wrath throws him back inside for a slingshot clothesline for two but Enos comes back with a powerslam for the same. Mike shoulders him in the corner but misses a second attempt. Wrath's Meltdown (pumphandle powerslam) is good for the pin in a short match.

We look at part of Warrior's speech last week, leading into the announcers talking about WarGames.

The Nitro Girls dance in the crowd.

Nitro Party winner.

Kaz Hayashi vs. Dean Malenko

The announcers immediately start talking about the Horsemen, despite most of the team losing almost every major match they've had in the last few weeks. Dean takes Kaz down by the arm and grabs the leg before putting on a reverse chinlock. Off to a headlock on Hayashi but he comes back with a knee to the ribs and a quick running senton. Dean easily takes him back down and puts on a figure four around the neck as we take a break.

Back with Dean winning a quick slugout but being sent to the floor. Kaz hits a very nice corkscrew plancha and gets two off a German suplex back inside. Hayashi goes up but his moonsault hits knees. A leg lariat (clearly misses Kaz by about six inches) sets up the Tiger Bomb and the

Cloverleaf to give Dean the win.

Rating: C. Not a terrible match though I have no idea why they needed a break in there. Kaz was another in a long list of talented cruiserweights who got lost in the crowd despite being able to put on good matches. Malenko looked a bit off tonight but when you're as sharp as he is most of the time you can miss once in awhile.

Video on the Wolfpack.

Here's the Wolfpack minus Sting with something to say. After the catchphrases, Nash talks about Hogan running his mouth week in and week out, even though he can't run with them. Nash says if Hogan wants a war, he's got one. He talks about coming here for a war two years ago and his goal is to run the company. If he has to run off Hogan and Bischoff and become world champion to do it, then that's what he'll do. That brings him to Goldberg who has speared him twice in a row now.

After the first time, they had a beer and everything was cool. The second time there was no beer so everything isn't cool. However, if Goldberg wants to make things right, he can team up with Nash tonight against someone whose names are cut off by Goldberg's music. We get the long walk from the back to continue a motif tonight. Goldberg comes to the ring and says he'll team up with Nash if that's what Nash wants. Nash wants Hogan and Giant tonight.

Konnan vs. Jim Neidhart

Konnan went to the back during the break and comes out again for reasons I still don't understand. A headbutt puts Neidhart down as Tenay explains what Arriaba La Raza means. Konnan grabs an armbar but Neidhart fights up and clotheslines Konnan to take over. Neidhart's straps come down, making his back rakes all the more vicious. A middle rope knee drop only hits the mat though and the Tequila Sunrise gives Konnan a fast win.

Tony brings out Stevie Ray for a chat about the Black and White surrounding him at the end of Thunder. Stevie won't comment on what they were saying to him but he'll deal with the Giant in due time. As for the TV Title, Stevie is coming for Jericho soon but here's an angry Booker T

for his return. Booker says he's been out of the country healing so he could come back and give the fans 110%. He can't even leave his house to get his paper without people asking him about Stevie Ray.

Booker worked hard to get the TV Title and would like an explanation from Stevie about the title. Stevie says he defended the title because it got between the team. Booker was out for six months (it's been like two) and Stevie did what he had to do. Tony informs Stevie that Booker is the #1 contender to Bret Hart's US Title, ticking Stevie off. Booker says he's coming for the title and wants Stevie to have his back.

Nitro Girls.

After a break Tony is in the ring and calls out DDP. He has a pen of his own and wants to shove it through Bischoff's ear. Page runs down Hogan as usual and says if someone wants to step up as the third member of Team WCW, do it right now. This brings out Roddy Piper and I cringe a little bit inside.

Piper praises Page for doing a good job lately while he's been in Hollywood. While he was out there, Piper heard people at Time Warner making fun of Bischoff's power trips. Piper says he's the only man that Bischoff can't fire before implying Hogan and Bischoff are women. He'll join Page in WarGames and promises to get Warrior to join them. Wasn't he on the team already?

Hour #2 begins.

Steve McMichael vs. Riggs

Mongo takes him into the corner but Riggs actually takes over and stomps him down into the corner. McMichael is sent out to the floor and taken down by a clothesline from the apron as this has been one sided so far. Back in and the announcers talk about Saturn vs. Raven with the Flock's freedom vs. Saturn being back in the Flock as the stakes. A dropkick puts Mongo down again and Riggs stomps away at the chest.

We hit the chinlock on Mongo who slaps the mat like he's tapping but the referee says nothing. McMichael fights up but a knee to the ribs drops

him again. Riggs mocks the Horsemen sign and avoids an elbow as Mongo can't get anything going. A boot in the corner stops a charging Riggs and it's a pair of three point tackles and the tombstone to give Mongo the win. Those were the only major offensive moves he hit all match.

Rating: D. This was basically a Riggs squash until the last thirty seconds. The Horsemen losing nearly every match they're in sounds like something Bischoff would be behind to bury the team even further, because why would he care if the fans keep chanting for Flair? Granted having Mongo in there isn't helping anyone. The guy just isn't that good.

Post match Horace blasts Mongo in the head with the stop sign and the beating is on until Malenko makes the save. Saturn comes out as well but is quickly sent back outside, leaving Mongo and Malenko to hold up the Horsemen sign.

More Nitro Girls, this time in leather.

Scott Norton vs. Rick Fuller

They trade chops in the corner as Fuller has already survived longer than anyone has against Norton in weeks. Norton comes back with a Samoan drop but gets kicked in the face, only to pop back up and chop it out again. Scott blasts him in the face to take over again and a powerbomb is enough to end Fuller.

Here's Scott Steiner with his doctor to make fun of Chicago and Michael Jordan. The doctor says Steiner can't wrestle tonight but Scott wants Rick out here right now. This of course brings out Buff Bagwell dressed as Rick as the crowd can be heard groaning. Scott offers a doggie treat to get out of the fight, causing Buff to roll over and play dead for the pin.

Lex Luger vs. Brian Adams

They finally lock up after about a minute of stalling before taking their time with some lockups. Luger grabs a headlock as Heenan defends Bischoff for reasons of general weaselness. Luger sends Adams to the floor with some posing as the stalling continues. Back in and Luger hiptosses Adams

down but a Vincent distraction lets Brian get in a right hand to take over. Luger is kicked to the floor and sent into the steps for two before it's off to a headscissor choke from Adams.

Back up and Luger is whipped into the corner but comes back with right hands to a big reaction. Not that it matters though as Adams suplexes him down and puts on a nerve hold. Another comeback is thwarted by a gorilla press gutbuster for two but Adams misses a knee drop. The clotheslines and forearms are good for two, followed by a powerslam and the Torture Rack for the submission.

Rating: D+. Slightly better than the previous match but that's mainly because the fans were more into the hometown Luger. The match was again close to a squash until the comeback at the end which doesn't make for the most interesting match in the world. Adams getting this high of a spot on the card continues to astound me.

More clips of Warrior from last week.

Here's Warrior to talk about how the Revolution that starts tonight. He talks about emulating the best in any field, such as when he emulated Hogan as champion. Warrior rants about Hogan selling out to mediocrity and self pity which is the most coherent thing he's said in a long time. He does get in a good line by saying Hogan went from being one in a million to being one of the millions.

After pausing for no reason in particular, Warrior asks for patience before he takes out Hogan. Tonight is the beginning of the One Warrior Nation Revolution, which means he'll destroy Hogan. A revolution isn't based on cowardice and that's all Hogan needs to know. I have no idea what this was supposed to accomplish.

Hour #3 begins.

TV Title: Chris Jericho vs. Curt Hennig

Jericho is defending and takes over a minute to get down the aisle due to jawing with fans about their signs. He takes one away and kicks it, falling flat on his face in a funny moment. Feeling out process to start

with Hennig grabbing the hair and stopping a takedown attempt. Curt: "Two points!" They jockey for position until Hennig goes to the ropes for a breather.

Jericho slaps him in the face, sending Hennig into a frenzy of headbutts and chops. Chris chops him into the corner as this gets very physical all of a sudden. Now it's Hennig with chops of his own, setting up the Hennig neck snap for no cover. Jericho comes back with a spinning kick to the chin and some choking in the corner.

Curt takes out the knee to send Jericho outside for even more chops, only to have Jericho take him back inside to kick at Hennig's legs. A springboard dropkick sends Hennig outside and a middle rope version of the same move drops Curt inside. Hennig misses a dropkick and gets caught in the Liontamer but Hennig is right next to the ropes. The PerfectPlex is countered into a small package for two and they slug it out as the time limit expires at...6:10? At least make it close people.

Rating: C+. I was digging the heck out of this match with both guys working hard out there. Jericho seems like the kind of guy that would have a blast working with a guy like Hennig and he was on his game tonight. Really fun match which shows what happens when guys work hard. The lack of time makes me sad for a change.

Hennig gets the better of Jericho and here's Giant for the double team, but Giant shoves Hennig down instead to save the Canadian. Curt is furious.

More Nitro Girls.

Booker T asks Stevie to have his back tonight but Stevie sounds mad.

US Title: Bret Hart vs. Booker T

Bret is defending. Before the match Bret grabs a mic and says he's tired of being told he used to be a nice guy. The fans are the ones that have corrupted the heroes, which is why Bret went to the one man he could trust: Hulk Hogan. However, there's a problem in the form of Sting. Bret says Sting is his buddy, so how can he pick between Sting and Hogan. The

fans are to blame for his problems though.

Booker's music plays but he never shows up. We go to a break and come back to see Stevie standing over a fallen Booker and saying Booker and JJ Dillon turned their backs on him. Stevie comes into the arena to take Booker's place but yells at Bret instead of fighting him. Bret denies having anything to do with the attack as the NWO comes out with a shirt. Bret says there's no reason for Stevie to take his frustrations out on him before offering Stevie a spot on the team. Since Stevie is a midcard guy who is starting to get some traction, he accepts.

Hollywood Hogan/The Giant vs. Goldberg/Kevin Nash

After about five minutes of entrances, we finally get down to Nash vs. Giant but the fans are all over Hogan. Giant shoves him into the corner to start but Nash avoids a big forearm. A headbutt staggers Kevin back and a big boot drops him to the mat. Giant misses an elbow though and Nash hits the framed elbow in the corner. Both guys hit clotheslines at the same time with no one going anywhere so they both hit big boots to drop the other.

It's off to Goldberg vs. Hogan with the champion shoving Hogan down over and over. Hogan gets in some knees to the ribs and chokes to take over but Goldberg shrugs off being rammed into the buckle. A few shoulder blocks put Hogan down but Disciple hits Goldberg in the back with the title belt to change the moment. Hogan chokes away in the corner while Nash and Giant go at it on the floor (Tony calls it double teaming because he's not that bright) as Hennig and Disciple come in for the no contest.

Rating: D+. This was more spectacle than match and that's fine for the most part. They're clearly setting up the idea of the team battle at Fall Brawl which is more than you usually get out of a Nitro main event. I'd still like to see Giant pin Nash just one time to make up for the last nine months or so but I can't imagine it happening.

Luger and Konnan come out to even the odds until Goldberg and Hennig are the only ones left. Goldberg spears him down and Jackhammers him for the pin as this turns into an ECW show for a few seconds. Nash accidentally

knees Goldberg in the face and Giant sends him to the floor as Warrior, Page and Piper come out to clean house and stand tall. Goldberg and Nash have a staredown to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. That was a really strong ending actually with an actual focus for a change. It's not really surprising that WCW was actually winning a bit at this time with WarGames coming up and the Warrior offering something interesting. Unfortunately at some point he has to actually wrestle and it was all going to come down. Anyway though, less bad show than usual but all the nonsense earlier on brings down a good last hour.

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Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2003: The Next Big Rumble

Royal Rumble 2003

Date: January 19, 2003

Location: Fleet Center, Boston, Massachusetts

Attendance: 15,338

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

To say a lot has changed in the last year is a huge understatement. We have the Brand Split now and there are two world titles. That brings us to the part of this show that is most remembered: the world title

matches. We have HHH defending the Raw Title in one of the worst matches ever, followed by Angle defending the Smackdown Title in one of the best matches ever. Also Brock Lesnar is here and has taken Smackdown by storm. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about what you would expect it to be: thirty men wanting to go to Wrestlemania.

Big Show vs. Brock Lesnar

The loser is out of the Rumble. Big Show has Heyman with him, which I'm sure makes him the best wrestler EVER right? Show won the title from Lesnar at Survivor Series after Heyman turned on Brock in one of those matches where they were backed into a corner out of their own stupidity. Show shoves him around to start so Brock snaps off a belly to belly suplex to fire up the crowd.

There's a second suplex and Show is in trouble early. Lesnar loads up a third but Show grabs him by the throat and shoves him to the floor. Show throws Lesnar around the ring which looks awesome when you consider Brock is a massive dude. Lesnar avoids a charge in the corner and hits a release German suplex for two.

A big boot slows Brock down and a side slam looks to set up the chokeslam. Brock kind of rolls through it into a two count, followed by another belly to belly. Heyman gets dragged in but Show saves him from an F5. The chokeslam gets two as Heyman is losing his mind. Show gets rammed into Heyman and the F5 sends Brock to the Rumble.

Rating: C+. As intricate as modern wrestling has become, there's something to be said about having two big guys get out there and throw each other around for five minutes. The power displays here made the fans gasp which is the right idea. At the end of the day, wrestling is a spectacle and having larger than life characters doing larger than life things is a surefire idea. This wasn't so much good as it was fun, which is the right choice for an opener.

Jericho says he'll win the Rumble.

Raw Tag Titles: Dudley Boys vs. William Regal/Lance Storm

Regal and Storm are defending and Regal is STILL doing the brass knuckles thing. Storm and Ray get things going with Lance working on the arm, only to get powered down with ease. Bubba hits one of his LOUD chops in the corner and takes Storm down with a kind of chokebomb. In something I've never seen him do otherwise, Bubba hooks a standing Figure Four. Actually I can't think of anyone who has ever used that.

Off to D-Von for a dropkick (what's gotten into the Dudleys tonight?) and here's Regal to get slammed down immediately. The champs double team D-Von down and we get into the standard tag team formula. Storm takes D-Von to the mat and it's off to Regal for a front facelock. Lance comes back in with a cravate into a sleeper as this continues to meander along.

D-Von rolls Storm away and makes the tag to Bubba who speeds things up. The guy has emotion if nothing else. A big running splash in the corner crushes both champions and a side slam gets two on Storm. The American hits a German on the Canadian for two, followed by a spear to the Englishman. The Bubba Bomb gets two on Lance and Regal takes What's Up. A double flapjack (stupid fans: "3D!") gets two on Storm and here's Chief of Staff Sean Morely. Regal finds the brass knuckles but walks into the 3D. D-Von hits Storm with the knuckles for the pin and the titles.

Rating: D. This didn't work for me. It felt like a Raw match that was trying to be a PPV match but never got near the hump they were trying to get over. The ending was stupid on top of that, as they had Regal beaten with the 3D, so why use the knuckles? Also it didn't help that Bubba single handedly beat up the tag champions for about two minutes straight. Bad match.

Lawler on that match: "I'm as confused as a baby in a topless bar." What is WITH the announcers and their similies/metaphors in this company?

Nathan Jones is coming. Oh geez.

We recap the Torrie vs. Dawn feud. This is one of those stories where you look at it in awe and wonder what they were thinking. Dawn Marie (a gorgeous Diva) fell in love with and married Torrie's fifty something

year old dad Al Wilson, then screwed him to death (literally) on their honeymoon. There was some lesbianism (as in kissing on screen and unfilmed other stuff) involved which was there to tease the audience and wasn't bad at all. This is supposed to be a stepmother vs. stepdaughter match. Again, I have no idea what this was supposed to accomplish.

Dawn Marie vs. Torrie Wilson

Dawn comes to the ring in a veil because she's in mourning. Torrie gets blasted in the face to start before spearing Dawn down and things get sloppy. Marie tries an armbar because we need some wrestling in this I guess. Torrie gets beaten on for a bit until they collide and hit the mat. Dawn hits a springboard spinning clothesline for no cover, giving us the highlight of the match. Torrie hits a neckbreaker out of nowhere for the win.

Rating: D-. Anything with these two in those outfits can't be considered a failure, but at the end of the day, there is no real defending this match in the slightest. It was HORRIBLE and the story was borderline insulting to my intelligence, but the girls looked good and I guess that was the whole point. Why not just have a regular match if you want to is beyond me, but it's 2003 so what do you expect?

Stephanie seems to hit on some young guy in the back when Eric comes up to trade some weak trash talk. They're both GM's at this point. Stephanie has a bombshell for Smackdown which would wind up being Hogan. They argue over money or blood being more important and nothing goes anywhere. That young guy by the way? Randy Orton.

House show ads, including one for 7pm on a Monday night.

Sean O'Haire as the Devil's Advocate promo. Sweet goodness this could have been HUGE.

Nathan Jones is STILL coming. Seriously did we need that twice in 30 minutes?

We recap HHH vs. Scott Steiner as I begin to take deep breaths. HHH was giving a promo about how awesome he was when Steiner interrupted and

demanded a title shot. This led to a series of contests like pushups and bench presses which went nowhere. Note that Steiner hadn't actually had a match in WWE up to this point. I wonder why.

Raw World Title: HHH vs. Scott Steiner

HHH has red trunks on here for some reason. He mixed them up every now and then and rarely did the other colors work. Stick with basic black Game. Hebner brings them to the middle for instructions which is ultra rare stuff. Steiner wins an early slugout and pounds on the champion in the corner. A gorilla press sends HHH to the floor and Steiner pounds away with those weird looking overhand punches of his.

Steiner suplexes him back in for two and works on the back some more. An elbow to the face puts HHH down and there's an appropriate Boston Crab. HHH powers out of it and hits the facebuster but Steiner no sells it. There's a bear hug which is quickly broken but Steiner snaps off an overhead belly to belly (1) for two. Flair saves HHH from being put in the Steiner Recliner and Steiner charges into a boot in the corner to finally change the momentum.

We head to the floor again where Scott goes into the steps. The fans aren't exactly thrilled with this so far but they've still got time to crank it up a bit. Flair chokes away with his jacket and HHH hits his second neckbreaker in about 30 seconds for two. Since we didn't allido it properly the first time, Flair chokes away even more. A Pedigree attempt is countered into a slingshot into the buckle. Steiner looks like he's going through labor.

An overhead suplex (2) puts HHH down and I kid you not: Steiner FALLS DOWN due to exhaustion. He's clearly sucking wind and HHH didn't touch him at all. Speaking of HHH, he counters a tombstone attempt into a...I think it was supposed to be the third neckbreaker in about 90 seconds but Steiner took it wrong, causing it to look like a cutter where he fell backwards instead of forwards. That gets two and the fans are starting to boo.

HHH is loudly calling spots to try to salvage this before he hits a vertical suplex. For no apparent reason he goes up and jumps into a belly

to belly (3). Steiner can barely punch so he settles for some clotheslines. There's an overhead belly to belly (4) and an overhead belly to belly (5) and an overhead belly to belly (6). The fans are openly booing Steiner now. His response? To hold HHH's hair while HHH rams his own head into the buckles (seriously, Steiner clearly isn't even pushing) and to hit a spinning belly to belly (7) for two and even more booing.

Steiner tries a butterfly powerbomb and literally falls backwards as he does it, causing HHH to land on Steiner's knees. The fans groan at the sight of this so HHH goes up top to get superplexed down. He's handing these spots to Steiner. THANKFULLY HHH tries to walk out but Steiner won't have it, because WE HAVE TO KEEP GOING. Steiner blasts HHH with the belt to bust him open to try to get the fans to care but the match is long past salvageable at this point.

Back in and Steiner hits ANOTHER belly to belly (8), causing the fans to get MAD. They're not annoyed, they're not wanting a new champion, they want Steiner to get out of their ring now. HHH tries to get counted out but Steiner goes after him AGAIN. Back in and Steiner does the pushups to tick off the fans even more as Flair is BEGGING the referee to stop the match.

Now HHH throws the referee to the floor but HEBNER WON'T STOP IT. I mean he pulls his arm up to ring the bell but stops and says keep it going. Steiner hits the NINTH belly to belly suplex (9) of the match for two so HHH hits him low and grabs a fast rollup for two. HHH finally gives up and hits Steiner with the sledgehammer for the DQ.

Rating: H. As in HHH, who I feel sorry for here. Now everyone knows I'm no fan of the guy in 2003, but he was in a HORRIBLE situation here. HHH was trying to keep this a coherent match, but Steiner was beyond worthless here, causing the match to sink to levels far below what any other main event "talent" would be capable of. After about seven minutes (out of eighteen), Steiner stopped doing anything resembling trying to have a match and was just doing suplexes.

Remember that back stuff he did at the beginning? Completely forgotten.

Did you see him try his finisher? Not even once. He somehow managed a belly to belly suplex every two minutes, despite being on defense for a good third of the match. This was absolutely horrible and quite possibly the worst world title match I can EVER remember, which is covering a lot of ground.

Post match, Steiner beats up HHH and Flair with the hammer, which gets SYMPATHY from the fans. HHH is getting SYMPATHY from a crowd. Think about that for a minute. And what's worse: THEY HAD A REMATCH! Oh and there's the Steiner Recliner to absolutely nothing positive from the crowd at all. Bischoff has to come get Steiner off HHH.

We cut to Cole and Tazz and even MICHAEL FREAKING COLE has a look on his face as if to say "WOW that was an abomination."

We recap Benoit vs. Angle. Angle won the title from Big Show at Armageddon thanks to Lesnar before revealing that he hired Paul Heyman to be his new manager. Heyman said anyone could get a shot other than Brock Lesnar and brought in Team Angle (Haas and Benjamin) to protect Kurt during a knee injury. Benoit won a title shot over Big Show to set this up.

Smackdown World Title: Chris Benoit vs. Kurt Angle

Team Angle is immediately ejected to make sure it's one on one. Benoit grabs a headlock to start before trying the Sharpshooter to send Angle to the floor. Back in and Angle goes for the ankle but gets dropkicked away. Benoit grabs a kind up reverse Figure Four but Angle grabs the rope. This is all holds/counter holds so far. Benoit gets sent shoulder first into the post followed by an Angle suplex for two.

They chop it out with Benoit taking over and hitting a reverse clothesline to take Angle down. Angle drops Benoit across the top rope but gets guillotined down by the Canadian. They head to the apron with Benoit DDTing him down onto the side of the ring. The champion has a busted nose now. Back in and the Swan Dive misses but Benoit rolls out of the Angle Slam. There's the Sharpshooter to Angle who eventually gets to a rope. A belly to back suplex gets two for Chris but Angle snaps off an overhead belly to belly (just one so far).

Back to the floor where Benoit gets dropped onto the barricade to further mess with his head. Off to a rear naked choke back inside so Kurt can overly loudly call some spots. Angle catches Benoit in another belly to belly followed by a belly to back for two. Back to the chinlock for a bit until a double clothesline puts both guys down. Benoit rolls some Germans but so does Angle. And people wonder why their necks were held together by tape.

Benoit gets the final German but Angle runs the ropes to hit the belly to belly off the top to put both guys down. That gets two but the Angle Slam is countered into the Crossface. Angle gets the rope, so Benoit shifts to an ankle lock. Angle reverses into one of his own and now Benoit is in trouble. Benoit goes to kick off but instead grabs another Crossface. Kurt counters into a rollup but Benoit put the Crossface on the other (right) arm this time. Angle stands up and hits the Angle Slam but can't immediately cover.

Angle takes the straps down but another German attempt is countered into a rollup for two. They trade HARD Germans until Benoit hooks a release German to put both guys down. Before anyone asks, the difference between this and the previous match with the suplexes is how hard these are. Steiner looked like he was at a dance recital but here they look like they're trying to kill one another. Not to mention there's OTHER STUFF in between the suplexes.

Benoit hits the longest diving headbutt you'll EVER see, but he can't cover because of his head getting jarred like that. Angle counters the Crossface into a reverse powerbomb onto the buckle. The Angle Slam gets a VERY close two as the crowd is losing their minds. Back to the Crossface but Angle rolls through into the ankle lock. Benoit rolls over but can't break the hold. He kicks Kurt off but Angle goes right back to the hold. Benoit keeps trying to kick him off but Angle hooks the grapevine and Benoit has to tap.

Rating: A+. That's your match of the year right there people. Oh wait according to Meltzer there was some match in Japan that no one but him ever saw and that has to be better than this right? Anyway, these two DESTROYED each other with some absolutely amazing counters and awesome

sequences out there while suplexing the tar out of each other. This both guy's best match ever, and that's saying A LOT.

Benoit gets a standing ovation, showing that he was ready to be world champion. Naturally that's why he had to wait fifteen months to get the title, because the world was BEGGING for another Steiner match, the Nash feud with HHH, and the Goldberg run of doom. Ok Goldberg I can live with but the other two? Screw that.

Van Dam and Kane say they'll knock each other out to win the Rumble.

Royal Rumble

The intervals are two minutes if you listen to Fink and 90 seconds if you listen to JR. There are fifteen Raw guys and fifteen Smackdown guys this year which would be the norm for a few years to come. Shawn gets #1 and Jericho gets #2, but it's Christian playing the role of Jericho at the entrance, allowing Jericho to sneak in from behind and jump Shawn. Jericho hits Shawn low and starts the beat down before getting a chair to crack Shawn open.

Chris Nowitski is #3 and he's perfectly fine with letting Jericho maul Shawn. Jericho easily dumps Shawn, setting up their classic at Wrestlemania. Nowitski isn't in the ring yet. Rey Mysterio (still pretty new here) is #4 as things speed up a lot. A springboard dropkick and rana take Jericho down but Nowitski gets in as well...or not as he slid back out. Rey escapes a gorilla press and dropkicks Jericho into the ropes, only to get jumped by Nowitski.

Edge is #5 for a big pop. He would have been world champion by summer if he hadn't hurt his neck. Jericho is sent into the post and Nowitski is knocked down, allowing the two good guys to pound away on each other while both miss finishers. A springboard rana by Rey is countered into a sitout powerbomb and Christian is #6. He hugs his brother but Edge spears him down out of common sense. Nowitski tries to dump Edge and Rey but gets caught by a "double" dropkick (read as Mysterio hit him but Edge completely missed and landed on Chris after he was already down).

The Bronco Buster hits Nowitski and Chavo is #7. He immediately takes Rey

down but gets caught in a 619. Rey drops the dime on Chavo and hits a 619 on Christian. He tries a springboard rana on Christian but lands on Nowitski and takes him to the floor in the process. Jericho puts Mysterio out, leaving us with Jericho, Edge, Christian and Chavo at the moment. You can add Tajiri at #8 to that list.

Christian gets the tar kicked out of him and Chavo gets put in a spinning backbreaker. Not bad for the first twenty seconds for Tajiri. Bill DeMott is #9 and no one cares. At this point, he had been a Tough Enough trainer and his gimmick was that the rookies had ticked him off so much that he was basically a sociopath. I've heard of worse. Tommy Dreamer is #10 and he brings some toys with him.

There are too many people in the ring at the moment. Edge gets in some kendo stick shots on DeMott for an elimination. Christian and Jericho hit Dreamer with trashcan lids in a modified Conchairto for another elimination. Tajiri elbows both guys down but tries the Tarantula on Jericho and gets dumped as a result. B2, as in Bull Buchanan as Cena's ex-lackey, is #11. Edge knocks out Chavo as the ring is thinning out nicely.

Jericho gets sent over the top but skins the cat and pulls out Edge and Christian in the process. Jericho is busted open but he's left all alone in the ring. RVD is #12 and man alive do the fans love him. They slug it out for a bit with Van Dam hitting a slingshot to send Jericho to the apron but not out. Matt Hardy (who strongly dislikes mustard) is #13. The heels (as in those not named RVD) double team the good guy (as in those named RVD) but Jericho is too weak to do much and Matt kind of sucks so Van Dam takes them down.

There's a Five Star to Jericho and Eddie is #14. He pounds away on Van Dam as well and hits a Frog Splash of his own, only to walk into a Twist of Fate from Matt. Jeff Hardy is #15 and Matt tries an alliance, only to get kicked in the gut. Jeff throws Matt to the apron but Matt's MF'er Shannon Moore prevents the elimination. There's the Twist of Fate to Matt but Shannon covers up Matt from the Swanton. Jeff just dives on both of them and Rosey of 3 Minute Warning is #16.

Absolutely nothing of note happens here so Test with Stacy is #17. He cleans house until John Cena is #18 with a rap for us. He manages to rhyme "Explain it to ya" with Wrestlemania so I'm impressed. He spends forever rapping until Van Dam throws him inside. The ring is way too full again. After Cena is in the ring for about eight seconds, Charlie Haas is #19. Van Dam and Jeff slug it out until Jeff goes up top like an IDIOT and gets shoved out. He would burn out and leave the company in about three months anyway.

Eddie walks the buckles and hits a rana on Jericho as Rikishi is #20, giving us Jericho, Van Dam, Matt, Eddie, Rosey, Test, Cena, Haas and Rikishi. Again that's too many people. Rosey and Rikishi square off but nothing happens. Instead they team up and beat up Matt and Shannon because they can, until Rosey clotheslines the heck out of Rikishi. Jamal of 3 Minute Warning (you know him better as Umaga) is #21.

Rikishi superkicks Jamal down almost immediately and there's a Stinkface for him. Kane is #22 and I think we have eleven people in there at the moment. He cleans as much house as you can clean with that many people in there before FINALLY putting someone out in the form of Rosey. Jericho gets thrown to the apron but hangs on. Shelton Benjamin is #23 and Team Angle starts taking over. Booker T is #24 and we DESPERATELY need someone to clear some guys out.

Booker immediately kicks Kane down and fires up a Spinarooni to a BIG pop. Eddie gets backdropped out and Booker pounds on Rikishi. A-Train (Albert/Tensai) is #25 and the hometown boy gets to beat up a lot of people in a hurry. Shawn Michaels runs in with a bandage on his head and goes after Jericho, causing Test to dump Jericho out. See, that way it's legal.

Maven from Tough Enough (finally with actual trunks) is #26. He goes right for Kane like an idiot and gets punched in the face for his efforts. Goldust is #27 and he barely makes it 45 seconds before Haas and Benjamin put him out. Booker goes off on Haas in the corner but gets thrown out by Team Angle as well. He would get the world title shot at HHH as a consolation prize.

Big Dave Batista is #28 and you can hear the fans react to him. The first guy he hits? John Cena. It's always cool to see the future in there like that. Test takes him down with a full nelson slam but Batista low bridges him for the elimination. Batista takes down Rikishi with a spinebuster before clotheslining him out. At least the ring is clearing out a bit. Brock Lesnar is #29 and is the odds on favorite to win this thing.

Brock immediately eliminates Team Angle by himself before F5ing Matt on top of them. A-Train hits a bicycle kick to take Batista down as Undertaker is #30 to a big ovation. The final grouping: Van Dam, Cena, Jamal, Kane, A-Train, Maven, Batista, Lesnar and Undertaker. Drop Maven and A-Train and that's a pretty stacked field. To the shock of no one paying attention, Taker is returning here. There's a 9 hour DVD of matches and moments where Undertaker returns easily.

Taker punches everyone and dumps Cena and Jamal with ease. Maven dropkicks Taker in the back and celebrates, earning himself a chokeslam. The elimination is academic. A-Train hits the chokebomb on Taker to finally slow him down as Kane chokeslams Lesnar. Kane and Van Dam, the Raw tag champions, start teaming up to beat people up but A-Train takes them both down. Van Dam saves Kane from a backbreaker and the champs double clothesline Albert out.

Kane tells Van Dam to let him pick Van Dam up and drop him on Batista, but Kane turns (not heel) on Van Dam to throw RVD out. We're down to Lesnar, Undertaker, Kane and Batista which is awesome by today's standards. Taker and Lesnar have a showdown but the other two guys break it up. Taker pounds away on Batista in a preview of the feud of the year in 2007.

A big spinebuster puts Taker down and Lesnar fights off the two Raw (Batista/Kane) guys. There's an F5 for Kane and NOW we get Taker vs. Brock. They slug it out and after Taker says big boot, he hits a big boot to take Brock's head off. The F5 is escaped but there's a tombstone for Brock. A clothesline casually puts Batista out to get us down to three. Taker teases an alliance with Kane but dumps him as well. He has to knock away an invading Batista and Brock dumps Undertaker to go to Wrestlemania.

Rating: B-. Good but definitely not great Rumble here. You could see the next generation in the blocks but the problem is they were just that: the NEXT generation. Taker was the only possible winner here other than Brock and that's a recipe for a bad Rumble. You need more than one candidate for the Rumble and as soon as Lesnar's music hit, it was clear who was winning this.

Taker says go win the title but he wants the first shot. Brock says ok to end the show. Did we need that?

Overall Rating: C-. The problem with this show is that the excellent match on the card is brought down by the HORRENDOUS match just before it. The Rumble is good but it isn't good enough to save an otherwise bad card. The show isn't terrible, but it's a sign of things to come for this year, especially with HHH on the Raw side. Not much to see here other than Benoit vs. Angle of course. HHH vs. Steiner is only worth seeing if you want to see a trainwreck.

Ratings Comparison

Big Show vs. Brock Lesnar

Original: D

Redo: C+

Dudley Boys vs. William Regal/Lance Storm

Original: C

Redo: D

Torrie Wilson vs. Dawn Marie

Original: DD

Redo: D-

Scott Steiner vs. HHH

Original: G-

Redo: H (As in HHH)

Chris Benoit vs. Kurt Angle

Original: A+

Redo: A+

Royal Rumble

Original: B

Redo: B-

Overall Rating

Original: B-

Redo: C-

I'm not sure what I was thinking the first time. The show just isn't that good.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/22/royal-rumble-count-up-2003-best-match-ever/>

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Wrestler of the Day – January 11: Abdullah the Butcher

Today's is a wrestler that is much more about the legacy than any individual accomplishments: Abdullah the Butcher.

Abdullah is a guy who took on an entirely different persona than he actually lived. Born in Canada, he took on the persona of a crazy man from the Sudan who never spoke in America and had handlers to do his talking for him. He never stuck around in one place for too long, meaning he was never going to win much more than a regional title. More often than not his story was that he was brought in by a big heel to take care of a big face, meaning this is going to be a different kind of look today. Basically I'll just be looking at a handful of random matches from around the world, as Abdullah has been everywhere other than the WWF.

First up we'll look at a match from World Championship Wrestling in the 1970s. Now a lot of you must be saying WCW didn't exist in the 70s and if you only know of one WCW, you would be correct. This is World Championship Wrestling from Australia. I'm not sure on a date but the promotion closed in December 1978 so it's before then at the latest.

Mark Lewin vs. Abdullah the Butcher

This is a called a war match so I'm assuming this is an old feud. Lewin is a guy most famous for his brawling so it should be a good fight. Butcher headbutts him into the corner and chokes away but Lewin comes back with some hard right hands to the head. More right hands knock the Butcher around before Lewin whips him into the corner over and over. Now it's Butcher with right hands as this has been almost nothing but punches. Lewin grabs his sleeper finisher but has to dropkick Butcher's handler Big Bad John. Butcher ducks a charging Lewin to send him into the ropes, tying his head in the cables for the eventual DQ.

Rating: D. This was exactly what it was supposed to be, though I've never heard of a war ending on a disqualifications. Lewin was a guy who was only going to work in the old system of wrestling. He wasn't bad but it was all character instead of much to see in the ring, which was perfect for the 70s.

Post match King Curtis Iaukea (top star of the territory) comes out for the save but is sent into the buckle to put him down. Butcher goes after the referee but Iaukea gets up and fights Butcher off. Lewin declares the war is still on.

Now it's off to Japan in 1982 for a match with a guy you may have heard of: Hulk Hogan.

Abdullah the Butcher vs. Hulk Hogan

Hogan looks far less cut up here. He's still big and muscular but there's nowhere near the definition. A LOUD Hogan chant starts up but Butcher shoves him away. Hulk shoves him right back but no one goes anywhere off running shoulder blocks. A jumping knee is enough to send Butcher to the floor though as the crowd is way into this. We hit the bearhug from Hogan for a change and he lifts the 400lb Butcher up in a nice power display.

Butcher finally goes to the eyes to escape and sends Hogan outside with one shot. They brawl on the floor with Hogan taking over and putting on a sleeper back inside. A running clothesline puts Butcher down but Hulk's splash hits legs. Not knees, but legs as Butcher doesn't raise anything. Butcher goes to the forehead and you can see Hogan blade.

A fork shot to the cut has Hogan's blood all over Abdullah's ample stomach and he rolls to the floor. Back in and Butcher hits a brainbuster and the elbow for two but it's time to Hulk Up (not yet perfected). Hogan punches him to the floor and they head into the crowd for a double countout.

Rating: D+. Eh it's Hogan against a monster with a hot crowd so what else are you expecting? Butcher would have been great as a heel of the month against Hogan on the WWF house show circuit but he never came to the company. Hogan was his usual self here instead of being the different guy he normally was in Japan.

To avoid the scorn of certain commenters, here's a match against Andre the Giant from Puerto Rico at the WWC's first anniversary show on September 13, 1983.

Andre the Giant vs. Abdullah the Butcher

Andre easily knocks him out to the floor with ease before bringing him back inside for some HARD right hands and chops in the corner. The Butcher stops a "charging" Andre with an uppercut in the corner before headbutting him down to the mat. Choking ensues but Andre comes back with chops to the chest. Abdualah pulls something out of his pants and jabs Andre in the throat before they lay on each other in the corner. Andre gets tired of this fighting stuff and just goes off on the Butcher, knocking him out through the ropes and into the crowd for a double countout.

Rating: D-. The wrestling sucked but watching Andre beat on people is always worth seeing, especially when he could still move. It's not a good match at all but the fans were into seeing the EVIL Butcher get what was coming to him from someone he couldn't push around. More fun than good and there's nothing wrong with that.

We'll stay in Puerto Rico with an ultra rare Zeus match from the 1990 anniversary show on July 7, 1990. And yes, it's that Zeus.

Zeus vs. Abdullah the Butcher

In case you've never heard of him, Zeus was an actor that was brought in

as a monster heel against Hogan, only for everyone to realize that he's an actor, meaning he can't wrestle. It's a brawl on the floor to start as the fans are INSANE for this match. Zeus mauls the Butcher on the floor before the bell and poses in the ring but that just warms Abdullah up. We go inside with Butcher, apparently a crowd favorite here, staring at Zeus as trash is thrown into the ring.

Zeus chokes away in the corner before putting on an awkward looking bearhug. Butcher gets pounded down in the corner as Zeus clearly can't do more than one or two moves. Again, not his fault as he's not a wrestler. The Butcher comes back with a shot to the throat but Zeus pounds away with left hands and chokes Abdullah into the corner. Abdullah won't go down though and pulls out his trusty fork, only to have Zeus take it away and put on another bearhug.

Butcher finally remembers those Hulk Hogan tapes he watched and goes to the eyes to escape and Zeus is in big trouble. The elbow (signature move) only gets one on Zeus and it's back to the choking. No one goes anywhere off some shoulder blocks so Zeus chokes some more. Butcher comes back with a single right hand to put Zeus on the mat and it's off to a nerve hold.

Zeus glares his way out of the hold and monkey flips Abdullah (seriously) down for some more choking. A few kicks to the ribs put Zeus in more trouble and they slug it out some more. Butcher knocks Zeus outside but he puts on a bearhug from the apron. They head outside and Zeus blasts him with a wooden podium as we get a double countout.

Rating: C. That rating only works if you look at it as ANYTHING other than a wrestling match. This was a spectacle instead of a match and that's the best way it could have worked. Zeus wasn't a wrestler and couldn't do much more than bearhugs and chokes but you can't hold that against him. Incredibly fun stuff here.

We'll close things out with one of only three matches from Butcher's most

famous run in America. It's the Chamber of Horrors match at Halloween Havoc 1991, which is a huge team match but when else am I going to get to talk about this?

Cactus Jack/Abdullah The Butcher/Diamond Studd/Big Van Vader vs. Steiner Brothers/El Gignate/Sting

Oh boy it's the Chamber of Horrors. Now if you've never heard of this, clear some room off your list of absurd gimmicks. This is inside a cage similar to the Cell, although there's no top on it and the holes in the cage are bigger. Inside are coffins, skeletons and a few weapons. The idea of the match is that everyone is fighting at once and at some point during the match, an electric chair will lower from the ceiling. Someone must be placed in the chair, strapped down and someone from the other team has to throw a switch, "electrocuting" them. And somehow, it'll be even dumber than it sounds.

Oh and Gigante is replacing the injured Windham and Cactus is replacing Oz, although Oz will be in a match later and apparently Oz replaced Jack in that match. No idea why they made the switch. Jack comes out with a chainsaw minus the chain. Sting is US Champion here and yes, this is really what they're using him for. Cactus jumps Sting on the ramp and Abdullah helps, but Rick comes out for the save. This is before we're even in the cage. Well Rick was but he left because it's just a cage so why should it be hard to stay inside?

In the ring Scott kills the Studd with a Tiger Driver while Gigante fights Vader. Sting gets a kendo stick to pound away on everyone he sees. Well everyone that isn't on his team that is. Or the referee either. Speaking of the referee, he has a camera on his head here which is really more annoying than anything else. That could be an interesting idea for an angle but it never went anywhere.

People in masks pop out of those caskets. They don't do anything but they pop out anyway. Sting clotheslines Vader to the floor and Gigante pulls

Studd off of the cage wall. The Steiners hit their top rope DDT on Cactus as the chair is lowered. Vader knocks Rick into the chair but Rick clotheslines his way out of it. Sting throws a casket lid up in the air so it lands on Cactus' head.

Now we have ghouls coming out with a stretcher. Again they don't do anything but they're there. Scott shatters a kendo stick over Cactus' head, breaking him open. Cactus and Sting climb the cage and ram each other into it, which is one of the few actual clear brawls in the match. The rest of it is too hard to call because of the awful camera work. Sting has the stick now and stabs Hall with it.

It's pretty much impossible to call this match as everything is all over the place and it's just random brawling. Sting is busted open, as is Abdullah. Cactus goes for the switch as Rick is put in the chair, but the future Freakzilla makes the save. The heels get Rick into the chair for a second but he fights out of it pretty quickly. He gets put in there again and Cactus goes for the switch. Steiner suplexes Abdullah into the chair instead and after Cactus takes FOREVER to stand next to the switch, he throws the lever and Abdullah gets "electrocuted."

Rating: W. As in wow, what were they smoking, or why. You can pick whichever you like and I think it'll be fine. This was a huge mess but to me, this is pure nostalgia. I haven't seen this match in years but I still remember about 80% of the commentary word for word. The match is terrible and incredibly stupid but it's a fond memory for me so I can't hate it.

Cactus checks on Abdullah post match but the Butcher gets up and beats up the ghouls that brought out the stretcher earlier.

Abdullah the Butcher is one of those guys that doesn't have a definitive history because he was the traveling attraction of the old days. As I said, he never was around in one place all that much and if it was he was little more than a bigger villain's hired goon. He's a guy who lived off his reputation and there's nothing wrong with that at all.

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<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2002: The Rumble Game

Royal Rumble 2002

Date: January 20, 2002

Location: Phillips Arena, Atlanta, Georgia

Attendance: 12,915

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

This is the first step to things falling downhill, as we're a few months away from the Brand Split and things falling through the floor in quality. The main event tonight aside from the Rumble is Jericho defending his newly won Undisputed Title (which he won by beating the Rock and Steve Austin IN THE SAME NIGHT in case you didn't know that) against Rock. HHH is back in the ring tonight also (he may have fought on Smackdown before this but I don't think he did) so let's get to it.

The opening video has clips of various Rumble wins in a photo album kind of theme. The theme for this year's show is 30 Men, 1 Winner. I've heard worse ideas which we'll get too very soon.

Tag Titles: Spike Dudley/Tazz vs. Dudley Boys

I LOVE Stacy as the Duchess of Dudleyville. I never remember her looking better. Anyway, Spike and Tazz are defending here in a reign that I don't think anyone ever remembers. The Dudleys beat up Spike recently so he's in a neck brace. The Dudleys attack to start and hit the belly to back neckbreaker on Tazz on the floor. It's Bubba vs. Spike to start things off in a handicap match for all intents and purposes. Bubba rips the neck brace off and drops a big elbow.

Bubba shouts at Spike to get up as we get a very nice shot of Stacy. Tazz is back on the apron as D-Von hits a Hennig necksnap of all things. Bubba loads up a second brainbuster on Spike but gets countered into a Dudley Dog for no cover. The tag to Tazz is missed so Spike has to take a double flapjack instead. Spike avoids a headbutt from D-Von and makes the Dudleys clothesline each other. Hot tag brings in Tazz to clean house with suplexes. A big boot to Bubba's head sets up a top rope cross body by Spike for two. Stacy interferes and gets put in the Tazmission. D-Von gets caught in the same hold and the champions retain.

Rating: D+. I have no idea what the point of this being on PPV was as it barely broke five minutes. Nothing with Stacy in the Dudley attire can be bad, but this came about as close as you can get. Actually scratch that as it wasn't so much bad but just short. I have no idea why this wasn't on Raw or something like that. Tazz would be retired very soon after this due to a horrible neck.

We immediately go to a recap of Regal vs. Edge which is based on Regal using brass knuckles over and over again. Edge got fed up with it and beat up a lot of people with a chair.

Edge has a chair with him tonight to counter the knuckles. Apparently he broke Regal's nose recently.

Intercontinental Title: Edge vs. William Regal

Edge is defending. The referee checks Regal over and over again for

knuckles and finds them in his trunks. Well you can't say he didn't do his job. The referee stupidly puts them on the ring post instead of like, giving them to someone to take to the back or something. Edge pounds away to start and chokes with his boot in the corner. He goes after Regal's bad nose as Lawler claims conspiracy.

Regal comes back with a clothesline but Edge kicks him in the back to put both guys down. Being the British dude that he is, Regal suplexes Edge down for two. Make that four. Uh six. Yet somehow that isn't three. Off to an arm trap chinlock followed by a hard forearm to put the champion down again. A double arm powerbomb hits Edge for two and they head to the apron. Edge busts out a DDT onto said apron, further injuring Regal's nose.

Back in and they ram heads to put both guys down as the match continues to drag at a slow pace. Edge wins a slugout and takes Regal down with a spinwheel kick and a suplex for two. Regal suplexes him down as well, only for Edge to hit a big old clothesline for two more. The Regal Stretch goes on out of nowhere but Edge reverses into a terrible version of his own to no avail. A top rope spinwheel kick puts Regal down but he finds another set of brass knuckles. Instead of swinging them though, he pulls the referee in the way of Edge's spear. Regal clocks Edge and wins the title.

Rating: D+. This didn't click at all. Regal didn't seem interested in selling at all and Edge wasn't ready to carry a match by himself yet. He was getting to the point where he could but it would take a summer of feuding with Eddie to get him up to that point. Regal wouldn't really do anything with the belt other than lose it to RVD. Nothing to see here.

Women's Title: Trish Stratus vs. Jazz

Jacqueline is referee for absolutely no apparent reason and Trish is defending. Jazz is basically being a bully and has injured Trish's hand coming into this. Jazz jumps Trish to start but misses a splash, giving

Trish two off a rollup. A modified hot shot slows the champ down again and a legdrop gets two. Jazz works on the bad hand for a bit but Jackie pulls them out of the ropes. Jackie of course makes it all about herself and won't count a cover on Trish. Stratusfaction hits out of nowhere for two and Jazz is up a few seconds later, basically no selling it. Trish hits a bad looking running bulldog to retain.

Rating: D. It was short, it was sloppy, the ending was stupid and Jackie was in it. What other kind of grade do you expect here? Stratus was starting to get better but it would take another year and Lita before she got amazing. Jazz was a pretty stupid pick to bring over to WWE as no one remembered her and she didn't have the looks to back up any lack of hype. Bad match here.

Flair says he'll win.

We recap Vince vs. Flair. Flair debuted after Survivor Series as the new co-owner of the company and has driven Vince crazy since. This led up to a street fight tonight between the two of them tonight which isn't as big a deal as they were shooting for I don't think. The highlight of it was Vince dressing up as Flair and saying destroying lives turned him on.

Ric Flair vs. Vince McMahon

Remember this is a street fight. Vince shoves him down to start and struts, so Flair punches him down and struts as well. Flair wins a chop battle in the corner (duh) so Vince goes to the eyes to escape. There's the Flair Flop followed by a Flair Flip in the corner as Vince is in full control. We head to the floor and get our first weapon shot, with Vince pounding on Ric with a metal Keep Off sign.

There's a trashcan shot to the head and Flair is busted open. How thin must the skin on his forehead be? Anyway, Vince steals a camera from someone to take a picture of Flair's cut before we head back inside. Since he's a jerk, Vince starts working over the knee in (less skilled)

Flair fashion. The leg is wrapped around the post and Vince puts on a Figure Four that Dusty Rhodes would be jealous of.

Flair turns the hold over and Vince IMMEDIATELY lets go of the hold. So not only is he better at it than some wrestlers, he's also smart. Never let it be said that Vince doesn't know what he's doing. Vince bails to the floor and grabs a lead pipe that he used to bust Flair open in the build up to the match. Flair catches him coming in with a low blow and pounds away on the floor.

Vince takes a monitor shot to the head and in a weird spot, we see a replay on the monitor on the table as the live match goes on. Vince is busted open now and we head back inside. Scratch that as we go back outside immediately where Flair's family takes pictures of Vince's cut. Set it up earlier, pay it off later. Good move. Back in and Flair kicks him low again just because he can, cracks him in the head with the pipe and ends it with the Figure Four.

Rating: C+. At the end of the day, this match makes as much sense as almost anything you'll see. Vince controlled at the beginning, but at the end of the day he's a boss and Flair is a veteran wrestler and athlete. It makes sense for him to be able to shrug that off and destroy Vince with relative ease once he got the upper hand. On top of that we got some good blood and Vince getting hit in the balls so how can this not be entertaining?

Stephanie talks trash about everyone else in the Rumble and runs down Debra as well. Austin walks up and WHAT's her away. Cole gets a bit of it too. This is when the bit was brand new and still kind of funny, as opposed to now when it ruins almost every serious promo.

No highlight package for the world title match? For those of you not around in 2002 (LUCKY!), Jericho won the title in December, beating Rock along the way. It makes sense for Rock to get the first shot, especially since they feuded over the end of the year.

WWF World Title: The Rock vs. Chris Jericho

Jericho still has both titles because HHH wasn't there to win the first Undisputed Title and get the new belt. Rock decks him immediately and the champ heads to the floor, only to run back in and get punched some more. Jericho misses a charge and hits the post but pulls off a hot shot out of nowhere to give himself a breather. They trade strikes in the corner before Jericho hits a spinwheel kick to Rocky's arms for two.

A suplex gets two for Jericho and for some reason Rock's left thumb is sticking out. The champ unhooks a buckle but can't get the Walls. A missile dropkick gets two on Rock and it's off to the chinlock. That goes on for a good while so Chris goes up again, only to get crotched and superplexed. A belly to belly suplex gets two for Rock but Jericho clotheslines him down and hits the Lionsault. Due to high reasons of arrogance, Jericho waits forever to cover and fights with the referee after getting two.

Another dropkick attempt by Jericho is caught in a Sharpshooter, but here's Lance Storm for a distraction while Jericho taps. Christian comes in as well and is promptly punched out by Rock. Jericho hits a Rock Bottom on Rock for two and the frustration begins. The champ loads up a People's Elbow but Rock nips up and sends Jericho out to the floor.

Both guys are rammed into both announce tables before Jericho's Rock Bottom attempt is countered into an AWESOME looking Rock Bottom by Rock from one table through the other. That only gets two back inside before Jericho counters another Rock Bottom into the Liantamer (yes I said Liantamer instead of the Walls). Ok now it's the Walls, which allows Rock to make the rope.

The jumping clothesline takes the referee down by mistake, allowing Jericho to blast Rock with the belt. Another referee slides in and gets two off that and Rock DDTs Jericho down. Rock covers...and Nick Patrick won't count. There's a Rock Bottom for his efforts and a People's Elbow

for Jericho but there's no referee. Rock checks on Hebner, allowing Jericho to hit him low, send him into the Chekov's Gun in the shape of an exposed turnbuckle. All that plus a rollup with his feet on the ropes is enough for Jericho to retain the title.

Rating: B. This took awhile to get going but once things picked up it turned into what you would expect from Rock vs. Jericho in a nearly 20 minute match. The overbooking worked here as Jericho needed something to boost him up to Rock's level, which is what you're supposed to do as a heel. Good stuff here and a very fine title match.

Shawn Michaels, in a really stupid looking Texas flag shirt, is at WWF New York. He picks Taker or Austin to win the Rumble.

Video on the Rumble. The main picks to win are Taker, HHH, Angle and Austin.

Royal Rumble

Rikishi and Goldust are #1 and #2 respectively and we've got two minute intervals. Goldie walks around Rikishi to start and gets punched in the face for his efforts. Rikishi knocks him around for a bit but can't quite drop the big load on Goldie's chest. A backdrop puts Goldust on the apron and Boss Man is #3, making it 2-1 against Rikishi. Goldust gets punched in the face but Boss Man pounds Rikishi into the corner. The heels explode after a long one minute partnership.

Bradshaw is #4 and hopefully he can pick things up a bit. He beats up everyone as Rikishi loads up the Stinkface on Boss Man. A superkick and a clothesline put Boss Man out and there's a Samoan Drop to Bradshaw. Goldie pounds away on Bradshaw in the corner and gets powerbombed for his efforts. Lance Storm is #5 and absolutely nothing of note happens until Al Snow (on Tough Enough at this point) is #6. Bradshaw kills Storm with the Clothesline as the fans want Head.

Billy of Billy and Chuck is #7 and we're still waiting on something to happen. The fans are still into this at least so it's not a failure at this point. Storm and Snow fight to the apron with Snow superkicking Lance to an elimination. Billy dumps Bradshaw and Undertaker is finally #8 to pick things up a bit. A chokeslam kills Billy (the third in the series, not starring Uma Thurman) and another one puts out Goldust. Snow and Rikishi are dumped out and Billy follows them, leaving Undertaker alone to a big reaction. He's evil here in case you're not up on Taker history.

Matt Hardy is #9, which is interesting as Taker injured both Hardys and Lita. The redhead gets in along with Matt and helps him take the big man down via a low blow. Matt hits a Twist of Fate and stomps away but can't get Taker out. Naturally Jeff Hardy is #10 because that's how the TOTALLY RANDOM draw works in the Rumble.

Taker slugs down one of the best tag teams ever in just a few seconds, only to get caught in the Twist/Swanton combo. Again, why would you use moves that keep a giant on the mat? Not that it matters as Poetry in Motion is caught and Jeff is easily thrown out. The Last Ride kills Matt and he's gone too, leaving Taker alone again. The clock during that segment was REALLY long too as they were roughly three minutes each to get the whole segment in.

Maven from Tough Enough is #11 but Lita is on the apron. Taker PUNCHES her down, drawing the Hardys back in. Taker dumps both of them again, but Maven dropkicks Undertaker in the back and eliminates him in arguably the biggest surprise elimination ever in the Rumble. The look on the Dead Man's face is hilarious as he has absolutely no emotion at all. He calmly turns around, gets back in the ring, and mauls Maven, sending him through the ropes to the floor. A HUGE chair shot cracks Maven's head and the beating continues until Scotty 2 Hotty is #12.

Taker punches Scotty down and throws Maven back in to eliminate him, which under old Rumble rules would count. The beating goes into the crowd

as there's nothing in the ring at the moment. Christian is #13 but has no one to fight because Scotty is still down. Instead we go to the back where Maven is rammed face first into a popcorn machine. Taker eats a handful of popcorn and finally leaves Maven alone.

Scotty gets in and walks into a DDT as DDP is #14. Nothing of note continues to happen until Scotty superkicks Page through the ropes to the floor and hits the Worm on Christian. Page sneaks back in and throws Scotty out as Chuck is #15. They all beat on each other for a bit with Christian and Chuck teaming up for a bit. Godfather, now the owner of an escort service in an attempt to salvage the gimmick, is #16 and brings out 12 good looking women with him. Page is eliminated off camera during this.

With Godfather in the ring after about 15 seconds due to dancing, Albert is #17. He's the Hip Hop Hippo at this point and lasts about 45 seconds before being tossed by the villains. Godfather is dumped soon thereafter, and here's Saturn at #18. Chuck and Perry slug it out as the fans cheer for the Ho's leaving. Nothing happens again, until Austin is #19. Chuck is the first victim, getting stomped down in the corner. There goes Christian, Saturn gets a Stunner, Chuck is eliminated, Saturn is dumped, Christian gets thrown back in, Stunned and thrown out again, Chuck gets the same as Christian, and Austin takes a breather.

Val Venis is #20 (and also returning) and things go about as you would expect, although Val does get in some offense and survives until Test is #21. A double teaming lasts for a bit until Austin remembers who he's fighting and dumps both guys in a few seconds. Austin does his watch bit when no one is in the ring with him. Notice the difference between the big stars and the regular guys: the big ones are CONSTANTLY trying to keep the audience entertained instead of letting them die.

Speaking of entertaining the crowd, HHH is #22. The entrance takes about a minute and a half, they stare at each other for about twenty more seconds, and the slugout only lasts for a few seconds until Hurricane is

#23. Luckily for him, the legends knock each other down so Hurricane can try a double chokeslam. The look on Austin's face is hilarious as the two of them dump Hurricane with ease.

Austin and HHH chop each other in the corner until Faarooq is #24 and lasts about that many seconds. Mr. Perfect makes a surprise return at #25 to a big surprise reaction from the audience. He looks a bit, shall we say, tipsy here. Perfect chills on the floor a bit as JR makes a mistake, saying Perfect debuted at the Rumble in 1993. In reality he was #4 in 1989. Austin and HHH double team Perfect to no avail so here's Angle at #26, drawing the rare double chant of YOU SUCK WHAT.

HHH and Angle pair off as do the other two guys and the match slows down a bit. Kurt starts suplexing people but can't dump HHH because Austin makes the save due to reasons of a big ego. Big Show is #27 in his one piece women's swimsuit. Angle gets chokeslammed so Austin and HHH double team the big man to limited avail. HHH saves Angle, presumably because he wants Kurt's help to get Show out. Makes sense I guess.

Show dominates everyone until Kane is #28. HHH gets chokeslammed so we can have our battle of the giants. Jerry: "They're not getting any smaller are they JR?" Uh yeah Jerry, actually they are. They do the double chokeslam spot but Kane kicks Show low and picks him up, slamming him to the floor. AWESOME display of strength there, but Angle immediately dumps Kane to get us back down to four.

Van Dam is #29 and hits a Five Star on Angle who is down from something we didn't see. Everyone but HHH gets kicked down so he hits a Pedigree to put Van Dam down. Booker T is #30, giving us a final group of Booker, RVD, Angle, Perfect, HHH and Austin. Booker throws out RVD without having to do anything else thanks to the Pedigree. We get a Spinarooni, followed by a Stunner and elimination to get us down to Austin, Angle, HHH and Perfect.

Austin hits a slingshot into the post on HHH who walks into an Angle

Slam. Angle rolls some Germans on Austin and the C/Kurts try to dump Austin. Austin hits some HARD right hands to break that up but as he tries to dump Perfect, Angle runs up and dumps the Rattlesnake. Austin pulls Perfect to the floor but Kurt sends Austin into the steps to break it up. Steve still isn't done as he comes back in with a chair for all three guys. Eh he's Austin so he can get away with it.

Angle accidentally clothesline Hennig but doesn't eliminate him. There's the PerfectPlex (BIG pop for that) to Kurt but HHH dumps Perfect a second later. Angle and HHH stare each other down and the Game pounds away on him to take over. Kurt gets HHH to the apron but can't get the win. HHH chokes away but charges into a backdrop, sending him to the apron. Kurt makes the classic mistake of not making sure the other guy is out and gets clotheslined to the floor, giving HHH the Rumble. For you trivia guys, this is the longest Rumble ever to date, even going 11 seconds longer than the 40 man version.

Rating: C+. This has some very bad spots in it but the rest of the stuff is solid all around. Once Austin gets in there things pick up a lot, but the 18 guys before him don't do much. Taker's elimination came too fast which hurt things here, as there was no one of note from #9 until Austin at #19. Still though, the good stuff here was good enough to check this out, but you might want to fast forward some parts of it.

Overall Rating: B-. This is a pretty good but certainly not great show. 2002 was a bad year for the company on Raw and things were clearly starting to look weak here. The main problem was the lack of elevation of anyone new to the main event in the year, as the main events for almost every PPV were people who had been there before. There's nothing on here that's required viewing but there's also nothing terrible on here either. Check it out but don't expect to be blown away.

Ratings Comparison

Spike Dudley/Tazz vs. Billy and Chuck

Original: C-

Redo: D+

William Regal vs. Edge

Original: C-

Redo: D+

Trish Stratus vs. Jazz

Original: D+

Redo: D

Ric Flair vs. Vince McMahon

Original: D+

Redo: C+

Chris Jericho vs. The Rock

Original: B+

Redo: B

Royal Rumble

Original: C-

Redo: C+

Overall Rating

Original: B-

Redo: B-

Yep, about the same for the most part here.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/21/royal-rumble-count-up-2002-game-on/>

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Royal Rumble Count Up – 2001: Austin X3

Royal Rumble 2001

Date: January 21, 2001

Location: New Orleans Arena, New Orleans, Louisiana

Attendance: 16,056

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

Austin is back and that's by far the biggest change from last year. He's been on a warpath after Rikishi and I think HHH for running him down last

year. Other than that there isn't much going on in the Rumble. We also have HHH defending against Angle and Jericho vs. Benoit with twenty minutes and a ladder. I think we'll have another solid show here. Let's get to it.

The opening video is what you would expect: one out of thirty will win and the rest will fall.

Tag Titles: Edge and Christian vs. Dudley Boys

The Canadians have the titles and the Dudleys have concussions. It's a brawl to start with the champions trying to bail very quickly. We wind up with Edge vs. D-Von to start as the challenger gets two off a neckbreaker. Off to Christian who is elbowed down for two of his own. Bubba comes in as Jerry makes fun of the Dudleys' injuries. A side slam gets two on Christian and it's off to D-Von vs. Edge again.

Christian finally goes for the back of D-Von's injured head to give Edge control and we get into the meat of the match. Christian gets the tag and starts pounding away on D-Von's head, followed by a neckbreaker from Edge for two. After a quick chinlock Edge hits a neckbreaker for two more as Bubba looks like he's about to cry. Since it's a Dudleys match, the fans want tables. Lawler wants gumbo.

D-Von breaks up a spike piledriver for reasons of wanting to stay alive, catapulting Edge into Christian. Edge and D-Von clothesline each other and the referee misses the ensuing hot tag. A Conchairto misses D-Von and there's the seen hot tag to Bubba. A pair of hot shots takes down a pair of Canadians and there's a Bubba Bomb to Christian. What's Up hits Edge but wouldn't that hurt D-Von's head even more?

D-Von goes to get a table and the distraction lets Edge get a title belt. Bubba ducks the shot and gets a VERY close two off a rollup. 3D is broken up by a spear to Bubba and a DDT to D-Von but Bubba kicks out again. The champions try What's Up but the Dudleys escape and the 3D on Edge gives us new champions.

Rating: B. This is one of those annoying matches where it's really good and therefore there's nothing to make fun of. These guys had some of the

best tag matches the WWF has ever seen and this was no exception, with all four guys looking great out there. Notice something about Edge and Christian and the Hardys: they came from tag teams but they were allowed to grow up in said tag teams, meaning once they made the transition to singles matches they had a far easier time. That NEVER happens today which is why tag teams don't make good singles wrestlers anymore. The crowd is white hot tonight too.

Drew Carey is here. He's promoting an improv comedy PPV and somehow got in the WWE HOF out of it.

Vince says Austin will be in the Rumble despite what happened on Smackdown with HHH. What actually happened isn't mentioned but whatever.

HHH tells Stephanie to not come to the ring with her tonight but she says she'll be there to take care of Trish. Drew Carey comes in and pleasantries are exchanged. He talks about meeting Kamala in an airport and plugs his PPV a bit. Drew seems cool here at least. Stephanie offers to introduce him to Trish for some reason.

The APA shows each other their Rumble numbers. Crash comes in and says he'll throw them both out even though they're friends.

We recap Jericho vs. Benoit. Do you really need an explanation here? They suplex each other a lot and fight over the IC Title so tonight it's a ladder match with Benoit defending. Oh and Benoit has hurt Jericho's arm.

Intercontinental Title: Chris Benoit vs. Chris Jericho

It's a slugout to start with Jericho getting a very early advantage. Benoit tries the Crossface but has to escape the Walls instead. Jericho misses a charge and hits the post before missing the springboard dropkick and crashing to the floor. Benoit posts him and goes for the ladder but stops to send Jericho into the steps. We're only three minutes into the match though so Jericho stops Benoit's climb. A ladder shot to the face puts Benoit down and the referee tells them they have thirteen minutes left.

Jericho lays the ladder across the top rope and of course goes face first

into it as a result. Good to see that even Canadians follow the first law of wrestling. Benoit tries a suicide dive but Jericho puts up a chair, causing Benoit massive head trauma. Jericho tries to ride the ladder from the apron onto Benoit on the barricade but the other Chris moves out of the way. A ladder to the face stops Jericho again and now Benoit swings a chair.

Back in and Benoit loads up a ladder in the corner before ramming Jericho face first into it. Jericho gets up and puts the ladder in the corner again before tying Benoit's legs between the rungs for a kind of Russian legsweep off the middle rope. Benoit comes right back with a dropkick to send the ladder into Jericho's face and a hard belly to back suplex. The ladder is placed on the top rope again and Benoit's face is whipped into it HARD. Jericho immediately follows up by see-sawing the ladder into Benoit's face. Almost every one of these shots would be classified as FREAKING OW MAN.

A missile dropkick puts Benoit down again but he saves a climb attempt by Jericho. Benoit suplexes Jericho out to the floor and both guys are down again. Benoit goes up again but has to stop to kick Jericho away. Jericho gets up anyway and bends Benoit backwards into the Walls ON TOP OF THE LADDER. Benoit falls on his head but still kicks the ladder over to stop Jericho. AWESOME sequence there.

Jericho drills him with the ladder and goes up, but Benoit immediately pulls him down into the Crossface. Jericho taps out but it means nothing other than pleasure for Benoit here. Benoit sends him shoulder first into the post but Jericho comes back by sending Benoit face first into the ladder. The ladder is moved to the corner and both guys climb, resulting in Jericho being superplexed back down.

The Swan Dive hits the mat though and Benoit is in big trouble. Jericho puts the ladder on top of Benoit's ribs, but the champion shoves it over anyway from the mat, sending Jericho face first into the buckle and out to the floor. Benoit goes up again but gets shoved out to the floor, allowing Jericho to sprint up the ladder and win the title.

Rating: A+. Take two Canadians, give them a ladder and 19 minutes and

this is what you should expect. These two beat on each other HARD and the match was excellent as a result. They came up with some new stuff while mixing in basic stuff like HIT THE GUY IN THE FACE WITH A LADDER but it was so intense that it became a classic. Check this one out.

Drew hits on Trish but she says no because she's involved with someone. Vince comes in and isn't exactly cool with Drew being around Trish. More PPV plugging ensues and Vince says to promote the PPV, Drew should be in the Royal Rumble. Drew says sure why not.

Billy Gunn is worried about Chyna hurting her neck again in the next match.

Jericho says he proved Benoit wrong.

We recap Chyna vs. Ivory. The RTC (Ivory's censorship group) hurt Chyna's neck with a spike piledriver and tonight is about revenge. This forces us to sit through Chyna trying to be emotional.

Women's Title: Chyna vs. Ivory

Ivory is defending here. Chyna immediately runs her over with a pair of clotheslines and a toss around by the hair. Stomping ensues and Chyna knocks her out to the floor. They head into the crowd so Chyna gorilla presses her right back to ringside. Back in and Steven Richards gets beaten up as well. In an ending to set up Wrestlemania, Chyna tries the Muta Handspring Elbow but hurts her neck (on the softest bump in the corner you'll see in years) and Ivory gets the pin to retain.

Rating: D. Ivory was squashed until the end when she won off an injury. What are you expecting from a match like this? This was designed to get more attention on Chyna because no female could conceivably beat her, so making her Women's Champion for her Playboy hype wouldn't do much good. Nothing to see here at all unless you're a fan of Chyna in leather.

Chyna gets looked at by Lawler, Gunn and medics, resulting in a stretcher job.

Trish and Stephanie run into each other and still don't get along. I can't decide if Chyna or Stephanie is a worse actress.

Drew Carey gets some gear and talks to Kane. Nothing funny is said and much glaring ensues.

Low Down, as in Headbanger Mosh and D'Lo Brown doing an Arab comedy gimmick (don't ask) is told that the Rumble spot they won earlier on Heat will be going to Drew Carey. See, THIS is a good use of a celebrity. Who cares if Mosh or Brown isn't in the Rumble? Carey isn't exactly a huge star, but he's more interesting than either of those two. He promotes his PPV, the WWF gets some publicity, life is good.

Fans at WWF New York talk about the world title match.

HHH breathes a lot.

We recap Angle vs. HHH. Angle is on the roll of a lifetime to begin a career, having won the title from the Rock and defended it against Undertaker. HHH got the shot through some corruption and says he's allowed Angle to be champion this long. Trish is playing both sides of the field, being in Kurt's corner tonight but obviously sleeping with Vince, who is on HHH's side at the moment. Stephanie couldn't act, but dang she looked good in leather pants while she argued with Trish.

WWF World Title: HHH vs. Kurt Angle

Angle is defending. They trade wristlocks to start with Angle taking it to the mat before HHH takes it to the corner. A clothesline puts HHH on the floor as things slow down early. Back in and Angle escapes a suplex and hits three of his own for a near fall. HHH bails tot he floor and gets punched for his efforts, but he manages to send Angle into the barricade to slow things down.

Back in and HHH takes Angle to the mat which isn't likely his best option. Since it's a HHH match, we go old school with an Indian Deathlock. A dragon screw leg whip puts Angle down again but as he loads up another one, Angle takes him down with an enziguri for two. Kurt comes back with a whip to send HHH over the corner and out to the floor. This is slow to start but they have a ton of time.

They slug it out on the floor and HHH goes into the steps. Angle punches

him around a bit more until a Stephanie distraction lets HHH crack Angle's knee with a chair. Still good psychology so far and I'm digging the pace. We get our first Flair move as HHH hits a knee crusher onto the steps. They head back inside after about three minutes on the floor and HHH cranks on the knee even more.

Off to an inverted Indian Deathlock because we can't quite reach the 80s yet. The facebuster gets two for HHH and it's time for a bad looking Figure Four, although at least it's on the correct leg. Trish interferes to try to break it up and we get a catfight on the Spanish announce table. Vince comes down to break it up as we completely stop watching the match. Vince carries Trish away but Stephanie pulls her off her dad's shoulder. We haven't seen anything in the ring for about two minutes now.

We FINALLY return to the match for a small package for two for Angle before it's back to the knee. HHH gets kicked into the buckle and Angle grabs a DDT for two. A Russian legsweep looks to set up the moonsault but HHH hits him low to block. HHH busts out a Razor's Edge out of the corner of all things for two. I've never seen him use that other than here. The Pedigree is countered into a slingshot into the post and Angle headbutts HHH in the crotch to boot.

Now the moonsault hits (I'm as shocked as you are) but he hurts his knee in the process. It only gets two as a result and Angle heads to the floor to walk his knee out. HHH dives off the apron and takes out Hebner by mistake. Angle goes into the post and we head back in where Angle runs the ropes (selling the knee? What's that?) for an armdrag off the top. Angle tries to get Hebner up but HHH rams Angle into Hebner, sending Earl into the steps as a result.

HHH grabs the belt but Angle counters into an overhead belly to belly. Now Kurt gets the belt but HHH blocks into a Pedigree for no cover. Austin runs out and beats on HHH before hitting him in the face with the belt. He throws Hebner back inside but Angle is still down. A Stunner puts the bloody HHH down and Angle gets a VERY delayed pin to retain the title.

Rating: B. This was good but the overbooking brings it way down.

Basically you have two matches here with the dividing line being the Vince/girls stuff. The match was starting off as a great psychological battle and it turned into an Attitude Era main event which it just didn't need to be. This was disappointing after the way the match started.

Rikishi (#30) and Undertaker warm up for the Rumble.

Rock talks about how the Rumble is like a big bowl of jambalaya. As for Kane and Undertaker possibly being together, he doesn't really care if they want to give each other a box of chocolates or kick each others' faces in, because Rocky is throwing them both out. It could come down to Rock vs. Bull Buchanan, Rock vs. Perry Saturn, or Rock vs. Steve Austin, but either way he's going to Wrestlemania. Rocky was feeling it here.

Rumbly hype video, where there are a legit high number of possible winners. Austin is the favorite but it's not 100% as long as Rocky is in there. This is also one of the last years where they really pushed the idea that ANYONE could win.

Royal Rumble

Jeff Hardy is #1 and Bull Buchanan is #2. Bull charges into the ring and the beating is on fast. Jeff fights back and goes up top before hitting a headscissors. The intervals are two minutes again this year if you care about those kinds of things. They slug it out in the corner with no one getting an advantage until Matt Hardy is #3. Poetry in Motion and a double clothesline quickly dispatch Bull, so the Hardys fight for awhile.

The clock starts so the Hardys stop brawling as Faarooq is #4. Things don't go any better for Faarooq than they did for Buchanan, resulting in a Twist of Fate and Swanton to knock him out as well. Jeff poses and Matt tries to dump him, resulting in some friction. Matt wins a slugout but gets caught by a Whisper in the Wind. Drew Carey is #5 and he wisely stands at ringside as the Hardys eliminate each other off the corner.

Drew is the only one left standing and the crowd seems amused. Then Kane is #6. JR: "Oh my God oh my God oh my God." Drew begs the Hardys to get back in as Kane stalks him. After about a minute, Kane gets in and Drew offers a handshake and then cash. Kane grabs Drew by the throat until

Raven is #7. Drew wisely eliminates himself, high fives some fans and bails. This was perfectly fine as he was in there like 3 minutes and gave us a decently funny moment. Also he seemed to enjoy being there which is more than I can say for most celebrities. Good stuff.

Anyway, Raven pounds on Kane with a kendo stick and a fire extinguisher blast. Al Snow jumps the gun at #8 to pound on Raven who eliminated him recently. Snow legally comes in a few seconds later with trashcans and lids, followed by a bowling ball which goes into Raven's crotch. Big gasp from the crowd for that one. JR: "It looks like a hurricane has blown through New Orleans."

Snow and Raven pound away on Kane with everything they can find before FINALLY taking him down with a double drop toehold into a trashcan. Perry Saturn is #9 and goes after Kane's knee which is pretty stupid in a battle royal. Everyone takes their shots at Kane and some triple teaming finally gets him to his knees. Steve Blackman with his hardcore fighting sticks is #10 as the hardcore segment continues.

Things slow down a bit as they are known to do in hardcore matches until Grandmaster Sexay is #11. Kane finds a trashcan and explodes, eliminating everyone in about thirty seconds. Honky Tonk Man, Lawler's second straight relative, is #12. He brings his guitar and starts to sing until Kane destroys the guitar over his head and gets his sixth elimination in a row.

Kane is standing tall so here's the Rock at #13 for our first big showdown. Rock goes off with punches and a jumping clothesline but Kane blocks the elimination attempt. Rock keeps pounding but runs into a big boot to put him down. Goodfather is #14 and Rock eliminates him after two punches. Kane pounds him down again, prompting JR to say "Kane is a carnivore chewing on a big piece of Rock Burger." Lawler: "....Rock Burger?" Tazz is #15 and lasts even less time than Goodfather.

Rock and Kane slug it out for a bit until Rock hits a Samoan Drop. Both guys are down until Bradshaw is #16. He's cool with fighting both guys and hits the Clothesline on Rock. Rock comes back with the spinebuster but Kane clotheslines Rock down to take over again. Albert is #17 to keep

up the size and power trend. Albert and Bradshaw pair off as do the other two guys but we can't get an elimination.

Hardcore Holly is #18 as Albert hits the chokebomb on Bradshaw. A bicycle kick from Albert puts Kane down in a pretty impressive looking move. Rock tries to dump Kane but the dude in the mask stays in. K-Kwik (R-Truth) is #19 and is immediately slammed down by Bradshaw. Nothing of note happens until Val Venis is #20. The ring is getting full now with Kane, Rock, Bradshaw, Albert, Holly, K-Kwik and Venis.

Rock powerslams Kwik down and William Regal is #21. He also beats up Kwik who isn't having a good night so far. Nothing of note happens again until Test is #22. He immediately knocks out Regal before pounding away on Albert. Big Show makes his return from a trip to OVW to try (and fail) to lose weight. He clotheslines Test out and dumps Kwik as well. Everyone not named Rock gets chokeslammed as Rock kicks Show low and eliminates him for the second year in a row.

As Crash Holly is #24, Big Show seemingly turns heel and chokeslams Rock through the announce table. Everyone goes after Kane and Undertaker is #25, meaning it's finally time to get rid of some of these guys. The Brothers clear the ring other than the two of them and Rock left on the floor. The tall guys stare each other down and Scotty 2 Hotty is #26. Not exactly the brightest guy in the world, Scotty gets inside and is gone in about 45 seconds.

Austin is #27 but HHH runs out to avenge the earlier interference. Rock climbs in as the Brothers watch Austin get beaten up on the floor. Austin is busted open as Taker beats on Rock off camera. Billy Gunn is #28 to save Rock for some reason. Taker DDTs Rock down as HHH leaves. Haku, as in Meng, the reigning WCW Hardcore Champion, is #29. He goes right for Taker and pounds him into the corner and everyone pairs off. Rikishi is #30, giving us a final group of Rikishi, Haku, Rock, Austin, Undertaker, Kane and Billy Gunn.

Rikishi gets in a fight with Austin on the floor and everyone is in the ring now. Austin dumps Haku as Taker ERUPTS on Rikishi. A chokeslam puts Rikishi down but a pair of headbutts go badly for the Dead Man. Rikishi

superkicks Undertaker out in a pretty big upset. As impressive as that was for him, he tries the Banzai Drop on Rock and deserves the elimination he gets.

We're down to four with Kane, Austin, Rock and Gunn. Gee I wonder which one is going out first. Gunn escapes the Stunner and hits the Fameasser on Austin but gets thrown out anyway a few seconds later. Rock DDTs Kane down as Austin chills in the corner. Rock and Austin lock eyes and the fight is on. That's Wrestlemania people. The spit punch drops a weakened Austin but he escapes the Rock Bottom. The Stunner hits but Austin stops to go after Kane and charges into a Rock Bottom.

Kane gets back up and gets sent through the ropes by Rock, leaving Rock vs. Austin for the moment. They slug it out some more and fight for an elimination, but Kane comes back in and dumps Rock in a shocker. That also gives Kane the record for most eliminations in a Rumble at 11. Austin kicks Kane low to put both guys down and Kane bails to the floor. Kane brings in a chair but walks into a Stunner. About four chair shots and a clothesline send Austin to the main event of the best show ever.

Rating: B+. It's not as good as last year but it was awesome for the most part with some BIG star power out there. They did a great job of keeping you guessing until the end as Rocky winning here was a very legitimate possibility. Austin is back from his surgery and back where he was before, which is exactly what he needed to do. Very good Rumble with some nice surprises.

Overall Rating: A. While it's not quite as great as last year, this is pretty easily the second best Rumble so far. The ladder match is excellent and the Rumble is quite good as well. The world title match is great too and there's a solid opening tag match on top of that. The Women's Title match sucks but it's less than four minutes long. Great show again, but things would be coming down soon.

Ratings Comparison

Dudley Boys vs. Edge and Christian

Original: B-

Redo: B

Chris Jericho vs. Chris Benoit

Original: A

Redo: A+

Ivory vs. Chyna

Original: N/A

Redo: D

Kurt Angle vs. HHH

Original: B

Redo: B

Royal Rumble

Original: B

Redo: B+

Overall Rating

Original: A

Redo: A

I'm surprised that I liked it that much less last time. Still a great show.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/20/royal-rumble-count-up-2001-drew-carey-could-go-to-wrestlemania/>

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book of on the History of In Your House at Amazon for just \$4 at:

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for just \$4 at:

Jay Bradley and Wes Brisco Gone From TNA

No word on why but I'd guess budget cuts. I'll keep you posted on any more names being released today.

Three Thoughts of the Day

Maybe I should watch Raw while I'm barely awake more often.

1. Boy That's Convenient!

Last night on Raw, Brad Maddox made the Usos vs. Daniel Bryan and Bray Wyatt have a rematch inside of a cage. Wasn't it lucky that there just happened to be a cage above the ring? Could you at least try to make it seem like this show isn't completely scripted?

2. Nice and Easy.

With Shield's breakup being imminent for the last three months or so, I'm very relieved to see that they're not being jobbed

out every single match. That idea is so overused and it takes away any kind of shock you might see coming. Thankfully Shield has only lost a handful of times and is still a powerful force. Hopefully this means they change some of their played out ideas up a little bit.

3. Watch How It's Done Junior.

If you've watched WWE in the last three weeks or so, you know that Batista is coming back next week and that he'll be in the Rumble. WWE has hyped up the return like they always do and I'm betting WWE will draw a crowd as a result. Batista is a big star and people are likely going to be interested in watching him return.

Compare this to the return of AJ Styles. Styles returned at the end of an episode of Impact and the next week he was in a world title unification match. No additional hype, no time to make the fans feel like they had to see it and nowhere near as many additional fans watching the show as they could have had. The rating was higher due to having a big match. Imagine how much higher it could have been if more people had known they could have seen AJ return to the ring for a world title unification match.

Monday Night Raw – January 13, 2014: YES I Did Tell You

So

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 13, 2014

Location: Dunkin' Donuts Center, Providence, Rhode Island

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

We're only two weeks out from the Rumble though it feels like there are months to go. The field is still wide open and that's usually a good sign, but the Rumble doesn't feel like a big deal right now. Actually nothing does, as everything feels only big but not huge. Obviously that could change, but we're still a long way off from Wrestlemania which is all that really matters. Let's get to it.

Wyatt Family vs. Usos

It's Bryan/Bray for once here and Bryan is extra aggressive tonight. Jey fights him off but Daniel takes him into the corner for the tag off to Wyatt who kicks away in the corner. Back to Bryan who rips at Jey's face and drops a knee to the chest before it's off to Bray for some evil sneering. Bray cannonballs down onto Jey's chest and runs him over in the corner.

Daniel comes in again for the YES Kicks as the fans aren't pleased with Bryan at all. Daniel puts on a chinlock but Jey fights up and enziguris him down, allowing for the hot tag to Jimmy. The Usos start cleaning house and send the Wyatts to the floor for the stereo dives. Back in and the other Family members run in for the DQ at 5:35.

Rating: C-. This was more about the story than the action and there's nothing wrong with that. Daniel is still going to get something big out of this, perhaps even winning the Rumble, but tonight was a good way of using him in the stable. It advances the story, which is what you need right now.

Post match the Usos fight off the monsters and escape, leaving Daniel on the mat with Bray pacing back and forth. Daniel gets up and Bray whispers something to him, sending Bryan to his knees with his arms out. Bray

gives him Sister Abigail and says that was for all of them. All four Wyatts leave together.

John Cena vs. Damien Sandow

Cena armdrags him down to start and cranks on an armbar as the announcers talk about how bad Sandow's year ended. A hiptoss puts Sandow down again for two but he pops back up and takes over with some headbutts as we take a break. Back with Sandow working on the arm but missing a knee drop. Cena initiates his finishing sequence but the AA is countered into an Edge-0-Matic for two.

Sandow's neckbreaker is countered but Cena can't get the STF. Damien kicks the knee out and puts on an Edgecator (Sharpshooter to start but Sandow doesn't step over and pushes the legs forward instead of pulling). Cena is easily out and grabs a half nelson slam, only to spin around into a neckbreaker for two.

John goes up top and shoves Sandow away, only to catch him with a tornado DDT for two. Sandow counters the AA into a sunset flip for two more before spinning a neckbreaker into a DDT for another near fall. You're Welcome is countered into the STF but Damien is quickly into the ropes. Sandow grabs a Crossface but Cena powers up into the AA for the pin at 10:25.

Rating: B-. Not as good as the MITB match due to the lack of drama but this was a very nice surprise. These two have chemistry in the ring but Sandow's stock is so low that there's almost no way to believe he's going to beat Cena. Still though, much better than I expected it to be.

Video on the WWE Network. That's going to be awesome.

Kane is looking at some papers when Brad Maddox comes in. Brad makes fun of Kane for letting the show fall apart already but Kane says Brad should be reinforcing the rules. Maddox makes Bryan/Bray vs. Usos in a cage for later. Kane says the door is chained and locked and he'll have the key.

Big Show vs. Jack Swagger

Before the match we see Big Show throwing Lesnar around last week. Show

throws Swagger around to start and headbutts him around the ring. A splash in the corner sets up a shoulder tackle to send Jack flying. The chokeslam ends the squash at 1:20. It's so nice to have them mix up the jobbers every now and then.

Big Show chases Cesaro off and punches Zeb out because he's not a nice guy.

New Age Outlaws/CM Punk vs. Shield

Rematch from Smackdown. Billy starts with Ambrose with Dean getting in some shots to the head to take over. Off to Rollins who is in long sleeves tonight and allows the tag to Road Dogg. Seth kicks him in the ribs and brings in Ambrose to rip at Dogg's face a bit. Punk gets the tag and cleans house on Dean, including driving elbows into the head in the corner. Rollins comes in but has to fight out of a GTS, only to bring in Reigns to a noticeable pop.

Punk and Reigns slug it out with Punk getting the better of it, only to be punched in the chest to give Roman control. Reigns is low bridged to the floor, allowing Punk to hit a suicide dive as we take a break. Back with Rollins dropping Punk and tagging in Reigns, who heads to the floor for a dropkick to the side of Punk's head as it hangs over the bottom rope. That's INSANELY athletic. Ambrose puts on a chinlock and stops Punk's comeback attempt before bringing Rollins back in.

Seth takes Punk into the corner for some knees to the ribs. Dean stays on those ribs with some stomps and throws Punk to the floor in a heap. Punk reverses a whip into the steps but Reigns throws Ambrose back in to cut off Punk's chance. A springboarding Rollins can't take Punk on but Reigns gets between Punk and the corner. CM is all good with that and high kicks Reigns down....but the Outlaws drop to the floor, leaving Punk 3-1. The numbers game catches Punk about 30 seconds later as Reigns spears him down for the pin at 15:31.

Rating: C. This was again about the story and there's nothing wrong with that. If I had to guess, that's the start of Punk vs. HHH at Wrestlemania which is a match about two years overdue. It's also likely a way to get the Outlaws out of the ring, which is the right idea. They're a nostalgia

act, meaning their shelf life is limited at best.

Punk gets TripleBombed post match.

Bray tells Bryan that they've been inside a cage their entire lives but tonight they find absolution. Bryan freaks out and says the same thing.

Funkadactyls vs. AJ Lee/Tamina Snuka

Before the match, NXT Diva Emma is shown in the crowd and identified by the announcers. That's a good addition to the division if it happens. Cameron takes Tamina down with a headscissors to start but gets draped over the top rope for two. Off to AJ who gets two off a neckbreaker, skips around a bit, and ends her with the Shining Wizard at 2:52. Total squash and Naomi was never in.

Post match Naomi makes the save and sends AJ running.

Orton is looking for the Authority and finds Kane after the break. He raves about all the people coming after him because he's the champion but Kane cuts him off. Orton can have Kofi tonight.

We get the first inductee into the Hall of Fame: the Ultimate Warrior.

Paul Heyman goes on a long rant about Big Show having his pituitary gland removed, leading to a massive case of stupidity. That's the only way you can explain him going after Brock Lesnar. Heyman ensures us that Lesnar isn't as easy to take out as Jack Swagger and he'll prove that at the Rumble.

Randy Orton vs. Kofi Kingston

Non-title. Orton is especially ticked off tonight and sends Kofi to the floor. A whip into the barricade gets two for the champ and he clotheslines Kofi down for no cover. Kofi is sent to the floor again but he manages to send Randy into the announce table a few times to get a breather. Back inside and Orton sends him face first into the middle buckle before superplexing Kingston down for two. Orton drops a knee to the face but Kofi comes back with strikes to the head to knock Orton outside. Kofi follows him to the floor and sends Orton face first into

the barricade as we take a break.

Back with Orton ramming Kofi into the announce table before taking him back inside for a chinlock. Kofi fights up but gets sent to the floor and into the steps for the third time tonight. Make it four as Orton is all insane again. A hard stomp to the side of the head gets two and we hit the chinlock again.

Orton shrugs off a comeback and walks around a lot more. Kofi gets a quick two off a backslide so Orton uppercuts him down for another chinlock. The hold is broken and Kofi avoids a knee drop. A dropkick sets up the Boom Drop but Orton rolls away and loads up the Elevated DDT...but Kofi counters into the SOS for the completely clean pin at 16:51.

Rating: D+. This was mind warping. First and foremost, WAY too long with the chinlocks and walking around. I get the idea of Orton letting Kofi hang in there and getting pinned, but there are far better ways to go about it than that. Then there's the booking which is crazy enough if you think about it for more than three seconds. Orton is the new world champion, meaning he should not be getting pinned on Raw. It's stuff like that which crippled the World Heavyweight Title and they don't need to do it with the one title.

Post match Orton throws a fit and destroys a bunch of stuff before hitting John Cena's dad in the front row. Security pulls him away and Cena comes out to tend to his Pop.

After the break Cena's dad is taken out on a stretcher.

Cody Rhodes/Goldust vs. Ryback/Curtis Axel

Non-title again. Axel hammers away on Goldust to start before the golden one comes back with an uppercut. Off to Ryback as the announcers mention his big Twitter rant over the weekend. Cody comes in with a not great moonsault press for two before it's back to Goldust who has to deal with Axel making a blind tag. Curtis gets in a clothesline to the back of the head and it's quickly back to Ryback for a chinlock. The announcers tell some far more entertaining inside jokes about Lawler in the AWA but unfortunately Cole gets back to the match.

Goldust comes back with a bulldog to put Ryback down and the hot tag brings in Cody. House is cleaned very slowly with Cody hitting a kick to the ribs and a missile dropkick to put Curtis down. The Disaster Kick staggers Ryback on the apron but Axel grabs a rollup for two. Axel's neckbreaker is countered into Cross Rhodes for the pin at 6:05.

Rating: D+. This just didn't do it for me for some reason. Ryback's Twitter rant looks like it's going to be turned into a storyline which isn't a bad idea at all. The match however didn't work, possibly due to Cody and Goldust clearing out the division in just a few months. Not terrible but nothing to see here.

Alberto Del Rio vs. Rey Mysteriou

Del Rio is still aggressive, driving Rey into the corner and slamming him down for two. Rey comes back with a headscissors but can't hit the 619. Del Rio bails to the floor and gets caught by a seated senton off the pron. Back in and Rey kicks Alberto in the head for two, only to get caught with a Codebreaker to the arm.

An armbreaker doesn't get Del Rio anywhere so he takes Rey down with a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker for two. The arm is wrapped around the ropes again but Del Rio's charge hits the post to give Rey a break. Alberto's Alabama Slam is countered into a headscissors and the 619 but Rey gets crotched on the top. The running enziguri sets up the armbreaker to make Rey tap at 4:55.

Rating: D+. Again this didn't have time to go anywhere but it wasn't far above a squash. Del Rio's psychology in the ring continues to be solid but his character is so boring that I just can't care at all. He'll still be a good first feud for Batista, even though he's just a warmup for Big Dave.

Post match Del Rio says that was a preview for Batista.

Same Network video from earlier.

Punk complains to Kane about the Outlaws and enters the Rumble.

We get a very well edited clip of the Usos talking about their match,

show "moments ago."

Usos vs. Wyatt Family

Inside a cage with Kane holding the key to the door. It's a brawl to start with the Usos being sent into the cage and choked a lot. Jey gets backdropped into the steel as the pace slows even more. Daniel tries to throw a charging Jimmy into the cage but Jimmy climbs up for an escape attempt. Bryan and Jimmy fight on top of the cage but Bray goes up as well to pull Jimmy backside. Jey pulls Bray down to the mat and does the same to Bryan with a Russian legsweep as we take a break.

We're quickly back with the Wyatts in control again until Jey slams Bray's head into the cage a few times, setting up a Whisper in the Wind for two. A double belly to back superplex puts Daniel down but Bray is back into it. He blocks a superkick from Jey but takes too long setting up Sister Abigail, allowing Jimmy to superkick Bray for the save. The Wyatts make a double save to keep the Usos from escaping but the twins knock Bray and Daniel down. Jimmy dives on Rowan and Jey climbs down for the win at 11:15 for our second big upset of the night.

Rating: C-. It's nice to see a new team win the match and we get more development in the Bryan storyline. Kane played no role in the match at all but he doesn't have a connection to anyone in it at the moment. I'm an Usos fan so I have very few complaints here. Not the best match but still good enough.

Post match Bray smiles and Bryan drops to his knees, but this time he shoves Bray away from hitting Sister Abigail. Bray's eyes get all freaky as Daniel is listening to the fans. Now Bray is looking nervous and offers to let Bryan have a free shot. Daniel isn't sure what to do so Bray calls him a coward. Bray charges but misses in the corner and Daniel erupts on him with running dropkicks. There are the YES Kicks as Harper and Rowan can't get past the locked door. Daniel rips off the coveralls and destroys Bray with everything he's got. One of the loudest YES chants you'll ever hear sets up the running knee to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. The show had an energy that it's been missing for way too long now. The Rumble is starting to take shape which has been missing

until tonight. We have a personal reason for Cena and Orton to be fighting and people started talking about winning the Rumble. That's all you can ask for about one of the last shows before the Rumble and Batista returning will make for a great go home show. As for Bryan, I told you two weeks ago that he wasn't going to be a Wyatt long and would come out of this looking fine. Why you people don't listen to me more often is beyond me.

Results

Usos b. Wyatt Family via DQ when Luke Harper and Erick Rowan interfered

John Cena b. Damien Sandow – Attitude Adjustent

Big Show b. Jack Swagger – Chokeslam

AJ Lee/Tamina Snuka b. Funkadactyls – Shining Wizard to Cameron

Kofi Kingston b. Randy Orton – SOS

Cody Rhodes/Goldust b. Ryback/Curtis Axel – Cross Rhodes to Axel

Alberto Del Rio b. Rey Mysterio – Cross armbreaker

Usos b. Wyatt Family – Usos escaped the cage

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And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for just \$4 at:

First 2014 Hall of Fame Inductee

This isn't a huge surprise. It's Ultimate Warrior. Yeah the guy is a nut, but he was as over as free beer in a frat house in 1990 and pinned Hogan 100% clean. That's worthy of getting in if nothing else.