

# Monday Night Raw – January 18, 2016: Not That It Matters (Maybe)

## Monday Night Raw

Date: January 18, 2016

Location: Nationwide Arena, Columbus, Ohio

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

It's the go home show for the Royal Rumble and that can make for a slower night of Raw. The big story from last week would seem to be Brock Lesnar being added to the Rumble to go after the WWE World Title. There's no word on where Reigns might be coming in, which opens up some options for Sunday. As for tonight, Brock is the guest on Chris Jericho's Highlight Reel so let's get to it.

Martin Luther King video. I don't know why but they always do some kind of a tribute to this. It certainly deserves the attention but this seems like one of the most important days of the year to WWE.

Opening sequence.

Here's Roman Reigns with something to say. Reigns talks about this Sunday being the fight of his life but tonight he only cares about Brock Lesnar. Instead he gets Chris Jericho, who Reigns is glad to see even though Jericho isn't the man he wants right now. Lesnar will be on the Highlight Reel tonight though and Jericho wants Reigns to be there too. Reigns loves the idea but here's the League of Nations to interrupt.

Sheamus wants to know when this Rumble became Brock Lesnar vs. Roman Reigns. I'm thinking that was last week chum. The League is involved as well and they intend to take back that WWE World Title. Sheamus insults Jericho's clothes so Chris gets in a weak insult about the mohawk. Del Rio brags about winning the Rumble a few years back but Jericho doesn't feel like having him on the Highlight Reel either.

Rusev talks about rumbling every single day in Bulgaria but Jericho can't understand him. Jericho asks Reigns who won the Rumble last year and who he eliminated to win. We get a "comes up short" joke from Jericho and a challenge is issued for right now. Apparently it's Rusev vs. Reigns with Jericho as guest referee for no real reason.

### Roman Reigns vs. Rusev

Non-title. Reigns grabs a headlock to start before firing off right hands. The League offers a quick distraction though and Rusev gets in a cheap shot to take over. That means it's time for a chinlock though, followed by a nice spinwheel kick for two on the champ. Back from a break with Reigns trying a headbutt, only to get ground down with a headlock. JBL incorrectly says Rusev eliminated half a dozen people in his debut Rumble as I guess even he has tried to forget that worthless cameo in 2014.

Reigns fights back with the corner clotheslines, only to get kicked in the side of the head for a pretty slow two count. Rusev tries a super Samoan Drop but gets countered into a Batista Bomb for the same deliberate two. Del Rio offers a distraction so Sheamus can jump Roman from behind, but Jericho is actually smart and ejects Sheamus anyway. Barrett gets the same treatment and Jericho throws in a bonus cartwheel. In the melee, Reigns hits a quick Superman Punch and the spear for the pin at 13:55.

**Rating:** D+. This is another match that has been done to death and there's almost no reason to watch it again. That's the biggest problem with someone like Rusev: there's no reason to believe he's going to win a big match as all he has is the Accolade. Once people start breaking it, all the drama goes away. Not a bad match but really just a way to fill time.

Post break, Stephanie yells at Jericho for not having the authority to make that match. Jericho goes into his standard string of Stephanie insults but she cuts him off to say he insulted her by making the bigger Highlight Reel. Apparently this means she has to negotiate with Paul Heyman and owes Brock more money now. As usual, Stephanie manages to take something interesting and turn it boring.

### Brie Bella vs. Natalya

Natalya brings out Paige as this is the Total Divas preview match. Even Cole calls it such. After a clip from the show of drama due to Alicia Fox unfollowing Paige on social media (the highest insult), we're ready to go with Natalya hitting a quick basement dropkick. That earns her the BRIE MODE knee and a chinlock. Brie spends too long posing after the YES Kicks though and it's a Sharpshooter to give Natalya the win at 1:30.

### Wyatt Family vs. Dudley Boyz/Ryback

Why is this still a thing??? There was a tables match on Thursday where the Dudleys won, only to be put through tables after. We take a break before the bell, meaning the only thing shown between breaks was the entrances. This is joined in progress with Bubba suplexing Harper and doing some Dusty Rhodes punches, only to get kicked in the face. It's off to Rowan vs. D-Von with the latter grabbing a neckbreaker.

That's it for D-Von's offense though as Rowan takes him into the corner so the Wyatts can take turns on him. Bubba starts playing cheerleader and it's back to Rowan for the double fist head vice. We hit the chinlock from Harper for a few seconds before D-Von collides with Bray. That means a hot tag to Ryback for some house cleaning and everything breaks down. Ryback heads outside to stare down Strowman but gets decked by Wyatt. Rowan breaks up a 3D to Harper, allowing Luke to hit the discus lariat for the pin on Bubba at 6:42.

**Rating:** D+. Can we please get something for the Wyatts to do already? As in something they might actually win instead of being built up only to fall down again? I'm tired of seeing them beat up the Dudleyz as the matches have ranged from decent to boring and they're getting lower and lower each time. I'm not sure why we're seeing it again but I'm sure it's due to them having nothing else to do. Not a bad match but it's really hard to care at this point.

### Big Show vs. Heath Slater

Before the match, the Social Outcasts promise to win on Sunday, though Axel says he can't understand a word Rose says. Slater runs away from a

big chop in the corner to start but is pulled back in by the hair. The KO Punch is good for the pin at 56 seconds.

The rest of the Outlaws are wiped out post match.

Stephanie gives the League of Nations a pep talk for the Royal Rumble.

Here are Vince and Stephanie to draw out the #1 entrant for the Royal Rumble. Vince brings up winning the 1999 Royal Rumble and Stephanie praises him for a bit. After a quick spin, Vince pulls out a ball and the #1 entrant is.....of course it's Roman Reigns. Vince thinks that's quite the coincidence so they pull another name and it's.....Roman Reigns. They even draw it a third time and leaves Reigns' name out, only to draw Reigns a third straight time. You had to know this was coming and it's probably the right call.

#### Becky Lynch vs. Tamina

Charlotte and Ric are at ringside. Becky starts in with the strikes but charges into a superkick. We hit the early chinlock for a bit before a slam gets two on Becky. Lynch fights back with her usual strikes in the corner, followed by the running legdrops for two. The Disarm-Her makes Tamina tap at 4:04.

**Rating:** D. Tamina isn't exactly the one you call on if you want an exciting match. At least Becky won and is getting a good push going into her title match on Sunday. It's a lot better now that they've got an actual story going but the silence during this non-title match really isn't the best sign.

Post match Becky asks for a Divas Title shot on Sunday but Charlotte says no. Becky gets smart by insulting Ric and saying Charlotte just isn't like her dad. That's enough for Flair, who accepts the challenge on his daughter's behalf. Charlotte really doesn't seem cool with that.

#### Kalisto/Dean Ambrose vs. Alberto Del Rio/Sheamus

Here's your fifteen minute match designed to do nothing more than to kill fifteen minutes. Kevin Owens is on commentary to make this more entertaining. Ambrose pounds on Sheamus to start and it's quickly off to

Kalisto, who is slammed down onto Sheamus for two. Del Rio is sent to the floor and we take a break.

Back with Sheamus hammering on Kalisto in the corner until the masked man jawbreaks his way out of a chinlock. The hot tag brings in Ambrose to start speeding things up, including a suicide dive to take out Del Rio. Dean gets in trouble again though as Sheamus gets two off an Irish Curse.

Del Rio gets the same off a kick to the head and it's time for some choking on the ropes. A Backstabber stops Dean's latest comeback but the top rope double stomp is broken up by something like an armdrag. Owens hopes Ambrose hurt himself but Dean is fine enough for a big clothesline to Sheamus and a hot tag to Kalisto.

A headscissors and the rolling kick to the head have Sheamus in trouble and Kalisto stumbles into a tornado DDT. The Salida Del Sol gets two with Del Rio making the save. Dean takes him to the floor and gets kicked in the face, leaving Sheamus to Brogue Kick Kalisto for the pin at 13:20.

**Rating:** C+. The match picked up a lot near the end until the really stupid booking took over. This is a place where a countout or something would have worked well, or just have Kalisto get another upset pin over Sheamus. It's not like pins mean anything on Sunday so just do it here and give me another reason to be interested in Kalisto. Or have him look like someone in over his head and take away some of the hype for Sunday. Same thing right?

We recap the opening segment.

Clips of the India tour.

We look at Jericho breaking Xavier Woods' trombone last week.

Earlier today, there was a funeral for Francesca the Trombone. Big E. starts quoting Jay Z. and Woods loses it. Kofi offers to get a new trombone but that's too much so soon. Francesca lives forever in Xavier's heart and she would want Big E. to beat Jey Uso.

Here's the annual All About The Numbers video.

30 entrants

28 Royal Rumble

811 people eliminations

42 eliminations by Kane, the most of all time

46 WWE Hall of Famers who have entered

8 Hall of Famers who have won

3 wins by Steve Austin

62:12 that Rey Mysterio lasted

1 second that Santino Marella lasted

2 straight wins Roman needs to retain

18 years since that happened

15 former World Champions on the roster

6 former Royal Rumble winners

1, as in the number that Reigns will enter the Rumble

### Big E. vs. Jey Uso

Kofi and Xavier are in suits from the funeral. Big E. takes him down to start until Jey jumps over in the corner and starts dancing. A quick cross body gets two for Jey and they head outside, only to have Jey get backdropped on the floor as we take a break. Back with Jey in the abdominal stretch before he avoids the apron splash to send E. outside again.

The running Umaga Attack misses in the corner but Jey settles for a kick to the face for two instead. E. misses another charge and falls to the floor so Jey can nail a nice plancha. Back in and Woods offers a distraction to break up the Superfly Splash, allowing the Big Ending to give E. the win at 9:34.

**Rating:** D+. Not much to this one but at least the trombone stuff before the match was funny. It's still not exactly entertaining or anything though as we've seen these guys fighting so many times now. The tag division needs some fresh blood and it's not like there's a team ready for the main roster down in NXT or anything.

Mark Henry, Titus O'Neil and R-Truth are in the back talking about the dream. Neville comes in and it's a bit awkward.

The League is talking about something.

Mark Henry/Titus O'Neil/R-Truth vs. Stardust/Ascension/Tyler Breeze

All eight of these guys will be in the Royal Rumble. Titus throws Viktor around to start and it's quickly off to Neville vs. Stardust with the latter dancing for some reason. Mark comes in and runs Stardust over before Truth comes in to work on a hammerlock. There's a hiptoss to Stardust but Breeze kicks Truth off the apron to take over.

It's quickly back to Konnor for an elbow drop but Truth grabs a DDT to absolutely no reaction. Neville and Breeze come in to speed things up with Neville throwing him down and getting two off the standing shooting star. Everything breaks down and the World's Strongest Slam to Breeze sets up the Red Arrow for the pin at 6:11.

**Rating:** D+. I know it's too late for Breeze (you know, three months after he debuted on the main roster) but Konnor and Viktor aren't available to take that pin? Yeah I'm not even going to bother getting annoyed at this one. WWE has decided Breeze isn't worth investing in on the main roster and that's about it for him.

It's time for the Highlight Reel with Jericho introducing his guests but being cut off by Heyman. Jericho cuts off Heyman's signature lines and asks where Lesnar is. Brock will indeed be here tonight but Heyman would rather talk about what happened the last time Jericho and Lesnar were in the same ring together.

Jericho gets back to the Rumble though and asks why Heyman tried to get Lesnar straight to the main event of Wrestlemania. Could it be that Brock

has developed so many enemies that Heyman doesn't think he's a lock to win again? Heyman laughs it off and plugs the Network by saying people subscribe to see Brock fight any one man so why wouldn't you subscribe to see him fight everyone at once. Jericho suggests that he'll throw Brock out and here's Lesnar for a rebuttal.

Before anything can be said or done though, here's Roman just like he promised. We get the big showdown as Jericho steps to the side and Reigns spears the heck out of Lesnar. Before anything else can happen though, Lesnar has to deal with the League of Nations, allowing Roman to spear Lesnar down again. Cue the Wyatts and the numbers get the better of Reigns but Brock sends the Family after Lesnar. They circle Brock and get in a shot apiece with Sister Abigail's Kiss leaving Brock laying to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C-. This is always a tricky show to grade as it's certainly not about the wrestling. The show before the Royal Rumble is about setting up the battle royal and they did that well enough, though they're making no secret that it's mainly about Reigns vs. Lesnar. The problem with that is any major surprises can completely change the course of the Rumble so a lot of this might not matter. At least we got some build to the rest of the show, but Sunday is a one match show and the build for that was ok at best. Not a great show but it did enough of what it was supposed to do.

### Results

Roman Reigns b. Rusev – Spear

Natalya b. Brie Bella – Sharpshooter

Big Show b. Heath Slater – KO Punch

Becky Lynch b. Tamina – Disarm-Her

Sheamus/Alberto Del Rio b. Kalisto/Dean Ambrose – Brogue Kick to Kalisto

Big E. b. Jey Uso – Big Ending

Neville/Titus O'Neil/R-Truth/Mark Henry b. Stardust/Tyler

Breeze/Ascension – Red Arrow to Breeze

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## **The #1 Entrant In The Royal Rumble Is...**

Yep. It's Roman Reigns. Were you expecting anything else? The drawing was rigged of course.

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## **2015 Awards: Moment of the Year**

This one is always kind of hard to pick.

Again, we'll get through some of the easier ones first.

The Salida Del Sol through the ladder at TLC was amazing and one of the biggest high spots in a LONG time. Just...dang. It doesn't really have a

long lasting impact but it was really cool and definitely deserves mentioning.

For a quick one, Brock Lesnar sitting up next to Undertaker and laughing at him, only to have Undertaker do the same. Again, didn't mean much but it was awesome at the time.

The Ronda Rousey appearance at Wrestlemania was great as well with the great line of "She's going to reach down your throat and play jump rope with your Fallopian tubes." This would be a nearly runaway winner if Rousey had really hurt Stephanie but pesky contracts prevented it.

Shield reunited for all of thirty seconds. That's more of a preview than an awesome moment though.

Now we'll get down to the actual top choices.

First up was the Divas Revolution, which would have been even better had Stephanie not been involved. I get that she wanted to be involved because she's Stephanie and has to be involved in something cool every time, but it was Paige's story and should have gotten the moment to make the whole thing work.

Another major one is Seth Rollins cashing in Money in the Bank. This was a legitimate shocking moment and the big story that people remember from Wrestlemania. I don't know if I'd put it at number one but it worked very well at the time, before WWE decided to make Rollins a worthless champion.

From the same show, there's the NWO vs. DX. This was the Monday Night Wars in the span of fifteen minutes and I had a blast with it. Points off for the complete lack of continuity and HHH winning, but this was so much fun.

Then Bayley did a reverse super hurricanrana, gave Sasha Banks a Bayley to Belly and won the Women's Title, followed by the Four Horsewomen posing in the ring one last time. Wrestling is all about emotion and that's what you got here. This was as good as it got in 2015 and it's going to be a long time before anything tops this.

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## 2015 Awards: Non-Wrestler of the Year

This might as well be named the Heyman Award.

Let's get some of the easier ones out of the way first.

Renee Young is adorable. Like, too adorable. She's going to wind up at ESPN at some point and WWE will lose one of their most versatile backstage people they've had in a long time. She's gorgeous, she's smart, she's witty and she knows she is. That's a very powerful combination and she makes it work.

Lana....dang how could they screw her up this badly? If there has ever been someone who seemed ready to explode on the Divas division and be one of the most over acts in years (not named Bayley or Sasha that is), this should have been it. Instead though, they put her with Dolph Ziggler where she disappears and then back with Rusev because all hail TMZ and now she's disappeared even more. They had something here and then just completely overthought it and screwed the whole thing up.

Corey Graves is growing on me a lot in recent months but he's not quite

there yet.

Maria Kanellis was on fire in ROH this year as she was nailing the “yeah I know I’m gorgeous” characters and running with it as the Queen of the Kingdom. Unfortunately ROH didn’t really do much with her, though she was always awesome on screen.

William Regal is still the best GM in years, though he wasn’t around much this year.

Now we’ll get to the big ones.

Stephanie McMahon. To save myself from a rant, we’ll go with she’s awesome and if she actually got what was coming to her a few times (and learned how to speak like a human), she would run away with this almost every year. Oh and stop dancing. It’s not funny and doesn’t make us relate to you.

HHH....can you really call him a non-wrestler? I mean, he wrestles every now and then. HHH is what an authority figure should be: he speaks very well, can go on some power mad rampages, but knows how to take a GREAT beating to make up for it. Unless you’re from WCW and then he must destroy you, after having a Terminator themed entrance with an Arnold Schwarzenegger cameo of course. Seriously what was that?

That leaves us with two, including Heyman himself. Here’s the thing though: he really hasn’t been around this year. When he’s there he’s great, but there’s no other Paul Heyman Guy to fill in time until Brock comes back from his multiple sabbaticals. Heyman can talk very well, but I can only hear him talk about knowing Roman Reigns’ family and how Undertaker is the last gunslinger or whatever so many times before I just stop caring. This was an off year for Heyman, and that’s probably due to ring rust.

Finally though, we have a concept you don’t often see in wrestling: an actor portraying a character to make it all the more awesome. That brings us to our winner: Dario Cueto of Lucha Underground. Dario has some of the most entertaining appearances and best speaking skills you’ll ever see. Above all else though, he makes you believe what he’s saying. It’s just

fun to watch the guy and he's evil for the sake of being evil. What more can you ask for than that? Cueto wins here and he more than earned it.

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## 2015 Awards Worst Wrestler of the Year

This one is in pairs.

Let's get the usual male suspects out of the way first: Big Show is old and boring, Kane is more old and boring, but at least Kane had some funny moments during the Corporate days to put him firmly ahead. It's still bad and the Demon character continues to fail as he's unstoppable until the bell rings when a few finishing moves can put him away. These two have to be in the running every year though so we'll get them out of the way here.

Oddly enough you hear about two members of the Wyatt Family this year. I understand the dislike for Rowan as he's the designated jobber of the team and has to lose more often than not, but ever since that stairs match (egads what a horrible thing that is to think about) with Big Show, his career has been spiraling down further and further every single day.

This one is easy to understand though and I can get the idea here.

On the other hand though, I don't get the hatred for Braun Strowman. This comes off as a case of people missing the point of a character. Strowman is supposed to be the unstoppable monster. Why would he do much besides big power moves, including the choke? This is an old school character and the way he's booked makes sense. I really don't know what people are expecting here but he's been used properly so far and is far from the worst.

Now we get to the most obvious choices with the Divas. We'll start with the developmental version in Eva Marie. Now I've gone on a rant or two about her, but the key difference is she knows how to get people to HATE her. Yeah she's terrible in the ring, but she's capable of driving fans into losing their minds. Watch her match with Bayley on NXT and see how freaked out people are over the idea of Eva winning the title. She looks great in her attire and knows how to get people to hate her. That's more than a lot of Divas have ever accomplished so I can't quite call her the worst.

However, I can call Brie Bella the worst. Brie is a fascinating case as she has a gorgeous face, is in great shape, is married to one of the most popular wrestlers in years and I absolutely do not care about her. She can do basic moves well enough (and has a decent missile dropkick) but the idea of knowing whether she's good or bad seems WAY too complicated for her. Just watch her throw the YES Kicks completely out of time whether she's a face or a heel. It's almost fascinating to watch at times as she just misses every beat, not even factoring in BRIE MODDDDDDE!

So yeah, as usual the Diva wins this.

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# Wrestling Wars Podcast Episode 36

With the return of Progress Wrestling's Body Guy Johnson.

<http://mightynorcal.podbean.com/e/wwp-36-bodyguy-roy-johnson-of-progress-wrestling-returns-he-has-turned-heel-and-he-doesnt-care-if-you-like-it/>

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# Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2009: And Then There Was Orton. And HHH

## **Royal Rumble 2009**

Date: January 25, 2009

Location: Joe Louis Arena, Detroit, Michigan

Attendance: 16,685

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, Jim Ross, Todd Grisham, Matt Striker, Tazz

This isn't so much the Royal Rumble as much as it is HHH and Randy Orton are in a match and 28 other guys happen to be in the ring too. Other than that we have Edge challenging the NEW WWE Champion Jeff Hardy and Cena defending against JBL, who has Shawn Michaels and his crisis of conscience working for him at the moment. This wasn't the best year for WWE so let's get to it.

No intro video this year. That's interesting.

#### ECW Title: Jack Swagger vs. Matt Hardy

Swagger won the title about two weeks ago and this is Hardy's rematch. We actually get big match intros for this, which is a rare sight for an ECW Title match. Matt takes him into the corner to start before punching Jack in the face. Striker calls that a pugilistic endeavor to sound smart. Another punch sends Swagger to the floor and we head back inside for a clothesline from Matt.

Jack heads to the floor to hide after Matt swings again. Back in and Swagger takes Hardy to the mat and cranks on the arm a bit. Hardy comes back with a dropkick in the corner and a bulldog for two, only to go up and get shoved down to the floor. Back in and Swagger starts in on the arm but Hardy quickly escapes a key lock. A punch to Hardy's arm blocks a clothesline and a big boot gets two for the champion.

Back to the key lock as Jack stays on the arm. He lifts Hardy off the mat by the arm a few times as the fans cheer for the challenger. Matt fights back but he's basically fighting with one arm here. A bulldog puts Jack down for two and a middle rope elbow to Swagger's back gets the same.

Hardy walks into a belly to belly suplex from Jack for two though and both guys are down. A DDT on the arm gets two for the champion but Matt blocks a belly to back superplex. Matt hits a decent looking moonsault for two and the fans are getting into these kickouts. The Twist is countered and Jack sends Matt shoulder and possibly head first into the post. The Swagger Bomb retains the title.

**Rating:** B-. Better match than I was expecting here with both guys looking good out there. Matt was getting close to being something decent as a

singles guy and this was his way off ECW and onto Smackdown. Swagger would go on to win a world title and shock the world in the process before falling through the floor soon after. Solid opener here.

Orton arrives and gets glared at.

#### Women's Title: Beth Phoenix vs. Melina

Melina is challenging and Beth has Santino with her here. Beth shoves her around to start before easily breaking out of a headlock. A LOUD Santino chant starts up as Beth throws Melina around. Melina comes back with a shot to the head but gets shoved down immediately again. The challenger hooks an armbar of all things but Beth easily stands up while Melina stands on her shoulder.

Melina gets on Beth's shoulders again but Beth shoves her down in a crash. A running Umaga attack in the corner puts Melina down again and Beth is in full control. In a freaky looking move, Beth grabs Melina's leg in a kind of ankle lock position and bends the leg forward to make Melina kick herself in the back of the head. FREAKING OW MAN! Melina escapes a gorilla press and fires off some forearms before getting two off a sunset flip. Two knees into Beth's back have her staggered and a hair drag gets two. Out of nowhere, Melina grabs a spinning rollup for the pin and the title. As sudden as it sounds.

**Rating:** D+. Not terrible here and the girls looked good so I can't complain much. That leg lock thing of Beth's was SICK and it's one of those moves that just looks painful all around. At the end of the day though, does it matter who has either of the female belts? They're completely interchangeable and this one was retired the next year.

We recap JBL vs. Cena, which is basically the Shawn Michaels Story. Basically the story went that Shawn was crushed by the financial crash and JBL offered to hire him to help win the title. Shawn helped JBL win a #1 contenders match and the question is will he screw over Cena tonight and compromise his morals? There was a VERY real argument to be made for Shawn vs. JBL at Mania for the title, so this wasn't a layup. The problem with this story is still there though: Shawn is a world class wrestler with the top company in the world....and he's broke? He may have lost his

savings but he's not unemployed.

JBL tells Shawn if he wins the title tonight, Shawn is free with a huge payday and he can be in the Rumble tonight, which at the moment he isn't. Bradshaw leaves and Taker shows up, saying that sometimes it's a nightmare getting to Heaven.

#### Raw World Title: John Cena vs. John Bradshaw Layfield

Cena is defending in case you skipped the previous parts. We get the big match intros here and even a weapons check for old times' sake. Cena takes him to the mat with a headlock to start but JBL counters into one of his own. A shoulder block puts JBL down and out to the floor as we take a breather. JBL whispers something to Shawn before heading back inside for some clubbing forearms to the back.

Cena slams him down for two though and we're still in the early stages. JBL heads to the floor again but this time Cena goes after him. He runs into Shawn though and stops cold, allowing JBL to get in a shot to take over. Shawn didn't move at all. Back in with JBL in control and a standing clothesline gets two. Presumably that one was only from Hoboken.

Off to a chinlock from the challenger as we keep things at JBL's slow pace. A side slam gets two on Cena and he rolls out to the apron. Layfield knocks him to the floor and then sends him into the stairs for two back inside. Cena fights out of a superplex attempt and hits the top rope Fameasser for two of his own. The champ initiates his finishing sequence with all of his usual stuff including the Shuffle. Shawn hasn't been a factor in the first nine minutes or so of the match.

JBL escapes the AA but gets caught in the STF instead. Shawn starts grabbing the ropes but doesn't do anything. Cena lets go of the hold anyway, allowing JBL to kick Cena to the floor. JBL's Clothesline gets two so he glares at Shawn for some reason. A quick AA attempt misses and JBL kicks the referee down by mistake. The Johns double clothesline each other and it's time for the big moment.

Shawn gets in the ring and is staring at both guys. Both guys get up and Shawn superkicks John. As in the challenger/him employer. He also kicks

the champion/the guy he was hired to take out before leaving. Shawn puts JBL's arm across Cena, causing the fans to chant for the champ. Another referee comes out and gets a two count for Layfield and both guys get up. Cena hits a quick AA on JBL to retain.

**Rating:** C-. The match itself was pretty dull but the drama worked well enough to make up for it. At the end of the day, JBL simply wasn't good enough at this point to hang in a world title match. Cena had to tone it WAY down to let JBL keep up with him and it showed badly. Still though, Shawn more than makes up for it and would go on to have a masterpiece with Taker at Mania so all is well and good.

We recap Edge vs. Hardy. Hardy shocked the world (including me) at Armageddon by winning the title, but a few weeks later he started having a string of "accidents" including having pyro go off in his face and nearly getting killed by a crazy driver. Everyone blamed Edge but he denied responsibility. The question is who is behind all this stuff. Hardy hasn't had a match that I know of in the meantime. I went to a house show during this period and Hardy didn't wrestle.

#### Smackdown World Title: Edge vs. Jeff Hardy

Vickie makes it No DQ for no apparent reason and Chavo is in Edge's corner because he's familia. Jeff spears Edge into the corner to start and pounds away as fast as he can. The fans almost immediately start chanting WE WANT CHRISTIAN. Now remember that line as I'll get back to it later on. Christian had left TNA and word hadn't broken yet on if he had signed with WWE yet (I don't think). Anyway, Jeff tries to bring in a chair but Edge kicks it out of his hands before it gets inside.

Hardy pounds away but Edge gets in a shot to take over for the first time. Edge sends him to the floor but can't hit a baseball slide, allowing Hardy to hit a clothesline off the apron. Back in and Jeff tries a springboard but gets kicked down to the floor for the third time. Edge rams him into various hard objects including tables and the barricade and then another table.

We head back inside again with Edge in full control including a spear in the corner. Jeff grabs a quick two off a sunset flip but gets

clotheslined right back down. Off to a body vice by Edge to slow things down a bit. Jeff fights up and hits a mule kick before going up top, only to jump into a dropkick from Edge for two. Now Edge goes to get two chairs but Jeff spears him down off the apron before it can be brought in.

Edge gets back to the apron but gets pulled down into a Twist of Fate onto said apron, sending both guys down onto the floor. Since it's Jeff vs. Edge, here's a ladder. Jeff spreads Edge out on the table but Chavo climbs up to slow Jeff down. Edge moves, so Jeff hits a HUGE splash to put Chavo through the table instead. Back in and Jeff gets two off a high cross body. Edge gets up first and pulls a buckle off, only to get caught in the Whisper in the Wind for two.

Out of nowhere Edge counters the Twist into a DDT for a very close two. We're pretty clearly in the final stages of this match which means it's getting awesome. Edge counters the slingshot dropkick into a kind of hot shot into the exposed buckle for ANOTHER two. The spear is countered into a Twist of Fate so Jeff goes up. After kicking Vickie away, the Swanton hits but Vickie pulls the referee out. Cue Matt to send Vickie into the ring and pick up a chair. To the shock of a lot of people, Matt cracks Jeff with the chair to give Edge of all people the world title.

**Rating:** B. This too awhile to get going but once they hit their stride they started acting like Edge and Jeff Hardy in a big match. The No DQ stuff wasn't needed here but it made things work a bit better. At the end of the day, these two work best when they can turn off the rules and go nuts, which is what they did here.

Now remember earlier that I mentioned Christian. He was originally supposed to be in Matt's spot, setting up a reunion with Edge. However, WWE felt the fans figured this out so we got Matt in his place. This also happened in 2012 with Sheamus winning the Rumble instead of Jericho. Based on this theory, Shawn should have kept the title at Wrestlemania 14 because almost everyone knew that Austin was winning.

That makes no sense and I don't get what they think this is accomplishing. It didn't work out well for Russo and it won't work out

for the WWE. Matt vs. Jeff didn't work at the end of the day, mainly because I don't think people wanted to see them fight. I'll give them this: they did come up with a logical reason for Matt to turn so it's not a terrible idea. It just wasn't the best option they had.

Orton says he'll win. Jericho pops in to thank Orton for punting Vince on Monday but Randy will probably get fired for it.

Rumble by the numbers which is roughly the same as the previous year.

### Royal Rumble

Mysterio is #1 and Morrison is #2. Rey kicks him in the face a few times to start but gets put on the apron for trying his sitout bulldog. A springboard cross body puts Morrison down and there's a big headscissors to take Morrison down. John gets sent to the apron but hangs on by the top rope, even when Mysterio dropkicks him in the ribs. Carlito is #3 and is the second tag champion in here along with Morrison. Those titles would be unified at Mania.

Rey tries a standing moonsault but gets caught in a modified swinging neckbreaker instead. Carlito hits a gorgeous double jump moonsault to take Morrison down and stomping ensues. MVP, currently on a winning streak after losing forever, is #4. There's Ballin on Morrison and a facebuster to Carlito. Rey get sent to the apron but he saves himself almost immediately.

Great Khali with the awesome dance music is #5. Everybody gets a chop and Khali poses a bit. Mysterio tries to springboard onto him and Carlito tries a Backstabber, both to no avail. Kozlov is #6 and immediately headbutts Khali out by himself. MVP misses a running kick in the corner and he's gone too (BIG heat on Vlad for that). Carlito is gone after jumping into a spinebuster and Mysterio looks to be up next, but heeeeeeeeeere's HHH at #7.

Since no one else can get a good match out of Kozlov, you know HHH is going to try his hand at him. They stare each other down and Kozlov hits the headbutt to take him down. The facebuster stuns Kozlov and HHH throws him out with ease. It's HHH, Morrison and Mysterio in there at the moment

with Rey chilling in the corner. The knee to the face puts Morrison down and Orton is #8.

The battle of Evolution continues and the backbreaker puts HHH down. Both finishers are countered with Morrison breaking up the Pedigree. Rey hits a seated senton on Orton and the 619 on Morrison before JTG is in at #9. Orton tries to put Mysterio out as people start pairing off. Ted DiBiase, as in one of Orton's lackeys, is #10. Mysterio and DiBiase immediately fight to the apron with Rey doing some gymnastics to stay alive.

Jericho is #11 and goes right for Orton. He can't get him out so there's a Lionsault to HHH instead. Jericho is knocked to the apron and Mike Knox is #12. Orton and DiBiase focus on JTG as Knox beats on Rey. HHH saves the masked dude for no apparent reason and Miz is #13. He goes right after JTG and hits something like the Skull Crushing Finale before going after the Game.

Morrison and Mysterio team up on Orton but John and Miz both take RKOs. There's one for JTG but HHH hits a Pedigree to stop Randy dead. HHH dumps Miz and Morrison to prove how awesome he is and Finlay is #14. Jericho backdrops Mysterio to the floor but he lands on Morrison and hops onto Miz to get back to the ring. Finlay beats on everyone in the ring until Cody Rhodes, the other of Orton's goons, is #15.

We currently have Mysterio, HHH, Orton, JTG, DiBiase, Jericho, Knox, Finlay and Rhodes. Legacy (the collective name of the trio) starts picking off people one at a time, starting with Finlay. They don't actually put anyone out but they get to beat on everyone at least. Rey dives at Orton but gets caught in an RKO in a nice counter. The Undertaker is #16 and here come the punches. His only victim at this point is JTG to clear the ring out a bit.

Goldust of all people is in at #17 and immediately goes for DiBiase. Rhodes pulls his real life brother (Goldust) off so Goldie sends him to the apron a few times. That's as far as he can get though as an RKO puts Goldust down and Rhodes gets to dump him out. Punk is #18 and happens to be the IC Champion at this point. There's a GTS for HHH as RKO works on Y2J. Mysterio gets sent to the apron by Knox and Finlay works on Taker.

Mark Henry is #19 and throws a lot of people around but can't get anybody out. Shelton Benjamin is #20 to fill the ring up even more. Jericho and Punk go up top for no apparent reason other than for Shelton to charge the corner and hit a kind of double DDT to bring them both back down. Billy Regal is #21 and goes right for Punk, who beat him for the IC Title a week or so again.

Mysterio dumps Henry off camera to thankfully get someone out of the ring. HHH is upside down in the corner but he winds up sitting on the apron. Here's Kofi at #22 to speed things up as well as he can with so many people around him. Taker dumps Benjamin and Kane is #23. After beating up a few people he stares his brother down before they start working together to chokeslam some people.

Punk pulls Regal out and brags about it without getting thrown out. R-Truth is #24 and nothing happens. Rob Van Dam makes a one night only return at #25 after not having been seen in the WWE in about a year and a half. That at least wakes the crowd up but there are too many people in there for his style of stuff to work. He loads up the Five Star but Truth is too close so he has to bail out in mid air.

The Brian Kendrick is #26 back when he was actually a big deal. To show how big he is, he manages to dump Kofi and get thrown out by HHH in about fifteen seconds. Dolph Ziggler gets lucky #27 but only lasts about six seconds longer than Kendrick with Kane getting the point. Your future World Heavyweight Champion ladies and gentlemen. Santino is #28 and breaks Warlord's record of two seconds in the Rumble by being clotheslined out by Kane before he can even stand up straight.

Jim Duggan makes his token Rumble appearance at #29 and he punches everything in sight, including knocking the Dead Man down. Big Show is #30, giving us a final group of Mysterio, HHH, Orton, DiBiase, Jericho, Knox, Finlay, Rhodes, Undertaker, Punk, Kane, R-Truth, RVD, Duggan and Big Show, or half the field in the entire match. Nearly everyone goes after him at once but it's Duggan that gets tossed instead.

Jericho tries to put a sleeper on Show but it gets about as far as you would expect. Taker throws Punk to the apron as Show dumps Truth. Punk

fires off some kicks and hangs on three times so Show finally knocks him out cold and out to the floor. Show knocks out Knox and Mysterio as Horny gets in for no apparent reason. Finlay tries to save him and gets dumped for his efforts at good parenting.

Jericho hits a Codebreaker on Kane and Orton hits the Elevated DDT on HHH. Taker and Show have their required staredown and RVD hits the Five Star on Orton. Jericho comes up behind Van Dam to dump him while Rob holds his ribs. That's his last WWE appearance to date. Chris turns around and sees Taker who tosses him with glee. Legacy teams up to put Kane out and we're down to Taker, Big Show, HHH and Legacy.

The trio surrounds Undertaker as HHH gets chokeslammed. Taker does the same to most of Legacy so the giants punch each other a lot until Show gets knocked to the apron and hangs on with his feet flying off the apron. THAT was cool. Not that it matters anyway as he gets RKO'ed out a few moments later but it still looked good. Show pulls Taker to the floor a minute later because that's how he rolls.

So as people expected at the time, it's HHH vs. Legacy for the Rumble. Taker and Show fight into the crowd for no apparent reason. HHH goes after Rhodes first but the numbers catch up with him. He gets beaten down and Orton says pick him up. The RKO is countered though and HHH sends Orton to the apron. There goes DiBiase and Rhodes follows, but Orton sneaks up on HHH and throws him out to win the Rumble.

**Rating:** D. This was one of the weaker Rumbles there's ever been. For one thing, it was clear that Orton was going to win no matter what happened. Second and probably more important, they got caught in the classic Rumble trap of having WAY too many people in there at once. They didn't even try the three act structure here and it showed badly. That's something Pat Patterson was absolutely amazing at and he was gone by this point.

**Overall Rating:** C-. It's clear that the company was in a transitional period here and that makes this a hard one to get through. There's enough good stuff here to check it out, but it's nothing worth going out of your way to see. The only really solid match is Edge vs. Hardy and even that is nothing really worth seeing. This is a rare instance where the Rumble

didn't dictate how the show went as the rest of it is a far easier sit than the Rumble itself.

### Ratings Comparison

Jack Swagger vs. Matt Hardy

Original: B

Redo: B-

Melina vs. Beth Phoenix

Original: C-

Redo: D+

John Cena vs. John Bradshaw Layfield

Original: C

Redo: C-

Edge vs. Jeff Hardy

Original: B-

Redo: B

Royal Rumble

Original: D

Redo: D

Overall Rating

Original: B+

Redo: C-

So let me get this straight: every match is literally within a single grade of the original but the original is nearly two grades higher? Dang

I was REALLY feeling generous that day. A show with an hour long match that gets a D doesn't sound like a B+ overall to me.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/28/royal-rumble-count-up-2009-the-voices-tell-me-no-one-but-orton-has-a-chance/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of the History of Wrestlemania at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B0188BJRGU>

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# Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2008: That's A Big One

## Royal Rumble 2008

Date: January 27, 2008

Location: Madison Square Garden, New York City New York

Attendance: 20,798

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

We're in New York City again and there are three main events tonight. We have the usual Rumble and Edge defending the Smackdown Title against Mysterio, but the interesting one here was Orton defending against Jeff

Hardy. I don't know how they did it, but the company did an OUTSTANDING job of making Hardy seem like he had a very real chance of taking the title tonight and shocking the world. I had no idea who was going to win and I LOVED that feeling. Let's get to it.

The opening video focuses more on the show being in MSG than anything else.

### Ric Flair vs. MVP

Flair's career is on the line but MVP's US Title isn't. Flair talks about having his first match here in 1976 but MVP's music cuts him off. MVP takes him into the corner to start and he's BALLIN already. Flair goes after the arm for a second before chopping away at the jumpsuit. MVP comes back with a running boot to the head for two before hooking a chinlock. The fans tell MVP that he sucks as he cranks on the chin.

Flair fights up and picks the leg, only to get small packaged for two. A backdrop puts Flair down and there's a running boot to the face in the corner for three, but Flair has his foot on the rope. You know MSG isn't buying that one. Flair tries to steal the pin but gets clotheslined down for his efforts instead. A superplex gets two for MVP and a double clothesline puts both guys down. Flair starts trying for some fast pins before slugging away. MVP punches him down and hits a facebuster, but the Playmaker is countered into a quick Figure Four to end this.

**Rating:** C. This was about what you would expect. At the end of the day, everyone knew Flair wasn't going to lose this but it was a way to give him one last moment in MSG before retiring in April. I'm not wild on him beating the US Champion clean but the title hasn't meant anything in years anyway so what difference does it make?

Vince talks to Horny about the Rumble. This is during the "Vince is Hornswoggle's dad" phase. Vince tells him to not trust Finlay but he has to win. Finlay comes in and takes some offense to Vince telling them not to trust each other.

Mike Adamle is introduced as the newest broadcaster. Oh dear. For those of you that don't remember him, imagine Cole but with something

resembling charm.

We recap Jericho vs. JBL. JBL cost Jericho the title at Armageddon and tonight is the blowoff. JBL brought Jericho's children into this too, saying Jericho would have to admit to them that he's a coward. Jericho would use this same line against Shawn soon after this.

### Chris Jericho vs. John Bradshaw Layfield

Feeling out process to start with JBL hiding in the corner and ropes a few times. Jericho forearms him down and pounds away but gets sent to the floor. That doesn't last long as he slides right back in and hooks the Walls but JBL immediately grabs the rope. A baseball slide keeps Jibbles on the floor where he is sent into the steps. Back in and Jericho charges into a hot shot to put both guys down.

A clothesline (not the one from down under) puts Jericho down as apparently he has a bad throat and neck coming into this. Bradshaw slingshots Jericho throat first into the middle rope and hooks a quick sleeper. Jericho fights out of it and hits a clothesline of his own, only to charge into a big boot. John sends him shoulder first into the post which busts his head open somehow. Back in and JBL pounds away at the cut as a villain would do. Jericho comes back but they botch a clothesline, causing both guys to get booed loudly. A Cactus Clothesline sends them to the floor where Jericho cracks JBL with a chair for the LAME DQ.

**Rating:** D+. This didn't work at all for the most part. Jericho didn't work at all as a face with the short hair during this comeback and I think everyone knew it. Thankfully he would turn heel over the summer and have the feud of the year with Shawn. The ending to this sucked and I don't think they had any other matches after this.

Jericho destroys JBL post match and chokes him with a cord, which is what JBL did to him. That gets Jericho cheered at least.

Santino tells Ashley that Maria won't do Playboy. Thank goodness he was wrong.

We recap Edge vs. Mysterio. Edge is with Vickie now who just happens to

be the corrupt GM. Mysterio won a Beat the Clock challenge by beating Edge himself to earn the shot. Edge is annoyed that Rey is claiming that Edge is just using Vickie, which of course he is.

### Smackdown World Title: Edge vs. Rey Mysterio

Edge is defending if that's not clear. Vickie, Hawkins and Ryder are at ringside as well. After some big match intros we're ready to go. The fans LOUDLY boo Rey and cheer for Edge as Rey kind of messes up a rana. Edge runs him over but Rey speeds things up, causing Edge to panic a bit. Rey gets sent to the floor where Hawkins and Ryder go after him, only to stop when they're nearly caught. The referee ejects them anyway.

Back in and Rey almost hooks the 619, only to have the champion bail to the floor. Rey is perfectly cool with diving to the floor to take out Edge, drawing boos in a bizarre sequence. Back in and a seated senton gets two for Rey but Edge takes his knee out to take over. Edge pounds away and hooks a half crab for a little while. Rey comes back with kicks to the face to escape and you would think he was choking a kitten from the crowd's reaction.

Rey loads up the 619 but charges into a powerslam for two. Off to a kind of ankle lock hold but bending the knee instead of the ankle. Edge tries to take the knee brace off of Rey but gets caught in the sitout bulldog to put both guys down. Mysterio uses his good leg to kick Edge in the face for two before hitting another kind of seated senton for two. Like an idiot, Rey goes up and hits a double stomp for two. Smart move on a bad knee Rey. Edge is sent to the floor where Rey slide through the ropes into a tornado DDT for two back inside.

Back in and Edge kicks Rey right in the face to put him down again. Why over complicate things? The spear misses so Rey hits the 619 and the top rope splash, but Vickie pops out of her wheelchair to break up the count. Edge misses another spear and puts himself in 619 position, but Vickie jumps onto the apron to take the hit, allowing Edge to hit the spear for the retaining pin.

**Rating:** C+. This was ok but you kind of expect more from Edge vs. Rey Mysterio. The ending was about Vickie, which would become a running theme

over the next few months. Edge being all conniving and backstabbing the already evil Vickie was awesome stuff, but getting there was tedious at times. Still not a bad match at all though.

Mr. Kennedy is waiting for Flair when he gets out of the shower in a towel. Shawn comes in before anything happens and shakes hands with Flair. Shawn: "Imagine, a loud mouthed platinum blonde with a catchphrase. That gimmick will never work." Batista comes in (pop), as does HHH (lesser pop). HHH: "I've said this a lot of times before Ric, but put your pants on." It turns into a merchandise plug in a cute bit.

Maria comes out to do the Royal Rumble Kiss Cam. This eats up some time until Ashley comes out to ask Maria to be in Playboy again. Santino comes out to insult the fans (and the Giants), saying the people would cheer if you asked if they wanted hepatitis. He brings out Big Dick Johnson with a rubber chicken and wearing a half Patriots jersey. You can figure this one out for yourself.

WrestleMania ad featuring Mae Young as a lifeguard. Ok then.

Mike Adamle introduces us to the next match, featuring Randy Orton vs. Jeff Harvey.

We recap Hardy vs. Orton, which is based on three simple words: Hardy could win. Apparently this match drew HUGE numbers for the Rumble, which showed why they held out on Hardy winning the belt for nearly a year. Hardy hit a HUGE Swanton off the set on Raw, which made you wonder how far he would go to win here. The video is a mini-history of Orton's career to this point, which isn't really a good idea for a heel. This is followed by a music video about Jeff Hardy set to the song Rooftops by the Lost Prophets, which really fits him well. I remember being very excited for the match and this video was a big reason.

Raw World Title: Randy Orton vs. Jeff Hardy

Jeff is Intercontinental Champion. Feeling out process to start with Jeff taking over via a headlock on the mat. An atomic drop gets two but Orton hits him in the face and brags to the crowd about it. Orton gets sent to the floor and a baseball slide sends him into the barricade. Hardy

follows with a plancha to the floor as JR SCREAMS to get Orton back in the ring. Randy tries to walk out with the belt but Hardy will have none of that. Orton is rammed into the announce table and back inside we go.

As Hardy tries a springboard, Orton dropkicks him right back to the floor in a big crash. There's the Orton Stomp and some choking as Orton shows off his wide range of offense. This is before Orton was orange so the visuals aren't all that bad. A pair of knee drops get two on Hardy as Orton asks the fans if they believe in Jeff still. Hardy sends Orton over the top to the floor, followed by a bad clothesline off the apron (it hit Orton's arm and completely missed his neck and chest).

Back in again and Jeff misses a charge into the post, giving Orton both a two count and control again. Randy hooks a chinlock with a bodyscissors followed by a powerslam for two. Back to the chinlock (yep it's an Orton match) to fill in some time. Jeff fights up again and takes Randy down with a clothesline but can't follow up. Jeff starts striking with everything he's got and hits the Whisper in the Wind to fire up the crowd even more.

That's one thing I haven't talked about enough here: the fans are WAY behind Hardy here. It isn't the usual New York reaction to a face. They want Jeff to win the title NOW. Hardy hits the slingshot dropkick in the corner but before he can hit the Swanton, Randy bails to the floor. Jeff is cool with that and hits (kind of at least) a moonsault to the floor. Back in and Jeff loads up the Twist but Orton counters into the RKO out of nowhere to retain.

**Rating:** C+. That's a really bad finish for a few reasons. First of all, it's WAY too sudden. If they were shooting at punching the audience in the stomach I guess they accomplished that, but it doesn't do much else. Hardy winning was an option, but at the end of the day they made the right move here....I think. I was disappointed Hardy won, but thankfully WWE stretched it out for a LONG time before he got the title, which was the right move at the end of the day.

Hardy gets a well deserved standing ovation. His time would come.

We get the Rumble by the Numbers video, which is always a favorite of

mine. Here are those numbers:

20 years of history

21 winners

569 superstars in the Rumble

36 eliminations (by Austin, since broken by Shawn)

11 Rumbles for Shawn (since broken by Kane)

11 eliminations for Kane in 2001

3 identities under which Foley entered the Rumble in 1997

2 feet that must touch the ground

1 woman in the Rumble (Chyna, since joined by Beth Phoenix and Kharma)

62:12 of time that Mysterio was in the Rumble

2 seconds that Warlord lasted in the Rumble (since broken by Santino)

3 wins for Austin, still a record

1 is the spot that has the same amount of wins as #30 (Shawn and Undertaker)

4 men that have won the Rumble from the 27 spot, the most ever

73 percent of the Rumble winners have won the title at Wrestlemania

I love that.

### Royal Rumble

As introduced by Michael Buffer (only the Fink gets all caps in the Garden), #1 is Undertaker, #2 is Shawn Michaels,. Now how's THAT for an opening pair? Isn't it amazing how a RANDOM pairing finishes the match the previous year and opens it this year? 90 second intervals here which seems to be the right amount of time most of the years. Taker powers Shawn around to start and elbows him in the corner.

Shawn gets crotched on the ropes but Taker GOES AIRBORNE with a running boot that misses in the corner. Shawn charges into the grip of Taker as he gets back in but there's no chokeslam. Taker kicks him in the face instead as Santino is #3. Twenty five seconds later Shawn superkicks him and Taker gets the elimination. Shawn tries to dump him but Taker hangs on and works on the arm.

Old School is countered and Shawn hits an atomic drop as Great Khali is #4. Taker jumps him as he comes in as Shawn is down from something we missed. The big chop puts Taker down as the fans tell Khali he can't wrestle. They grab each other by the throat but Khali misses a chop and gets eliminated. Shawn never touched Khali but charges at Taker when it's just the two of them.

Hardcore Holly is #5 and is a tag champion here. Taker slugs Holly down but Shawn tries to dump the big man again. John Morrison, also a tag champion but with Miz instead of Cody Rhodes like Holly, is #6. Morrison looks at Taker and immediately goes after Holly instead. Shawn dumps him to the apron but John gets back in. That winds up being bad for him as he get slammed down by Shawn followed by the top rope elbow.

Shawn tunes up the band but Morrison blocks the kick. Tommy Dreamer is #7 to a big pop and a LOUD Tommy Dreamer chant. #8 is Batista as we get another good blast of energy. Big Dave and Taker knock everyone down (no eliminations) and they stare each other down, only for Dreamer to charge at Batista, earning himself an elimination. Shawn goes after Batista now but Dave spears Morrison down instead.

Hornswoggle is #9 and immediately dives under the ring without ever getting in. Batista and Taker hammer on each other in the corner as Holly clotheslines Shawn to the apron. Chuck Palumbo, a lame biker at this point, is #10. Taker flips Morrison to the apron but he hangs on again. Shawn and Morrison fight on the top rope as Jamie Noble, Palumbo's enemy at this point, is #11. Noble has taped up ribs so his offense can't last long. Palumbo dumps him after less than a minute.

At the moment we have Taker, Shawn, Holly, Batista, Palumbo and Morrison in the ring with Horny underneath. #12 is CM Punk as Morrison makes

ANOTHER impressive save. Punk is insanely popular in New York of course and fires off running knees in the corner to everyone he sees, only to charge into a clothesline from Undertaker. Morrison, the guy that took the ECW Title from Punk, pounds away on him. Punk takes Palumbo out but gets jumped from behind by Shawn.

Cody Rhodes is #13 before he means anything at all. Yes he's a tag champion, and yes I stand by what I just said. Cody goes after Punk before shifting over to Taker like an idiot. Umaga is #14 to a decent pop. He spikes Holly out and gets to try on Batista for a bit now. Shawn gets backdropped to the apron but hangs on of course. Snitsky is #15 and badly pounds on everyone at once.

Rhodes jumps on Snitsky's back and they both head to the apron but no further than that. Taker gets headbutted by Umaga as the ring is starting to get too full. Miz is #16 with those stupid shorts of his. He goes after Punk as Taker tries to put Umaga out. Shelton with his even stupider gold hair of his knocks both Miz and Morrison off the top and onto the ropes but not out, before walking into a superkick from Shawn for the elimination in less than 20 seconds.

Jimmy Snuka of all people is #18 to a HUGE pop. He goes after Morrison as the fans do Snuka's barking kind of chant. Taker gets a headbutt which staggers the dead man before Snuka goes after Miz. At #19 here's Roddy Piper to an even BIGGER pop. He takes his shirt off and causes about half the audience to faint before having a showdown with Snuka, which the rest of the match (remember this includes Umaga, Taker and Shawn) stops to watch. Piper pokes Jimmy in the eyes and the match finally picks up a bit.

Kane is in at #20 to hopefully clean out the ring a bit. Yep he knocks out Piper and Snuka before chokeslamming Miz. Taker loads up a chokeslam on Kane but before he grabs the throat, he spins around and grabs Michaels instead. Carlito is in at #21 and spits the apple at Rhodes. Punk and Morrison pick up Carlito but he kicks off the ropes and sends them both into them. Punk kicks Morrison in the head but gets caught by a Backstabber. Cool little sequence there.

Mick Foley is #22 and you know the fans freak out for him. A double arm DDT takes Kane down as Umaga hits a Samoan Drop on Taker. The ring is WAY too full now with Taker, Michaels, Morrison, Batista, Punk, Rhodes, Umaga, Snitsky, Miz, Kane, Carlito, Foley and Horny under the ring. Morrison hits a springboard kick to take Foley down and Kennedy is #23. I'll say this: the ring has some star power in it.

There's a Mic Check to Miz and a kick to Taker after he sits up from something. A chokeslam puts Kennedy down and Taker starts beating up everyone. Here's Big Daddy V at #24. Taker shoves Snitsky out, Shawn superkicks Taker out and Kennedy throws Shawn out. The only question I have from that: why is Taker on his feet after being superkicked? Taker drops a leg on the announce table on Snitsky because he's a big jerk at times.

Kennedy and Rhodes fight to the apron as Henry is #25. Horny comes out from under the ring and pulls Miz out from the ring for an elimination. Horny goes back under the ring as V is trying to put out Morrison and Kennedy. Chavo is #26 and freshly ECW Champion, thereby making it clear that the ECW Title isn't a world title. Kane sends Morrison to the apron and then to the floor with a big boot.

Horny comes in again as V and Henry double team him. Finlay runs out ahead of the gun (presumably at #27) and blasts both guys with the club. He and Horny leave through the ropes and don't return, with the official statement being that Horny was eliminated for leaving and Finlay was disqualified. In the Rumble. Yeah this story was just badly done overall. Elijah Burke (D'Angelo Dinero) is #28.

Chavo dumps Punk after taking his title on Tuesday. That's just overkill man. Umaga spikes Batista under the ropes and out to the floor. HHH is #29 which leaves a hole at #30. Basically every major star has entered and the announcers aren't sure who is possibly left. Rhodes, V, Foley and Burke all go out at HHH's hands before he pounds on Umaga. The countdown begins for #30.

The roof is blown off the Garden, because JOHN CENA is #30. This is shocking as Cena had torn his pec and had announced that he would be gone

until Wrestlemania at the earliest. Imagine that: lying about an injury and getting a big response from the crowd. Who would have ever thought of that, and in wrestling of all things? Carlito, Chavo and Henry are all gone in about fifteen seconds before it's HHH staring Cena down.

We've got Cena, HHH, Batista, Kane, Umaga and Kennedy to go. HHH takes Cena down with a spinebuster but walks into a superkick from Umaga. Batista takes Umaga down with the spinebuster and dumps Kennedy to get us down to five. There goes Umaga and we're down to four. HHH and Batista dump Kane and we've got three left. Batista gives the double thumbs down, Cena says you can't see me and HHH says suck it. They are fighting catchphrases and it's on.

Trips and Cena go after Big Dave but he clotheslines them both down. The spinebuster plants Cena and another one takes HHH down. The fans don't seem thrilled with Batista so they cheer when Cena backdrops him down. HHH clotheslines Batista out and we're down to HHH vs. Cena.

Since this is New York, the fans hate Cena by default and it's boo/yay time. Triple H pounds away but walks into the Protobomb and the Shuffle. The finishers are both countered and they clothesline each other down. Cena can't FU HHH out and gets caught in a DDT. The finishers are countered again until Cena hits the FU on HHH for the elimination and the win.

**Rating:** C+. It took awhile to get through the bad parts but once Cena's music hit the place was electric. The fans booing Cena doesn't surprise me at all because that's how New York works. Cena would wind up facing Orton at No Way Out for some reason, resulting in a three way at Mania with HHH involved as well.

Cena celebrates to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C-. Well it definitely wasn't terrible but at the end of the day, nothing is really all that good here at all. The best match is probably Hardy vs. Orton and that's just ok. On the other hand though, nothing is really bad here and you likely won't be bored with the show. It's one of those shows where you watch it and other than Cena's return, you probably won't remember watching it two days later.

## Ratings Comparison

Ric Flair vs. MVP

Original: B-

Redo: C

John Bradshaw Layfield vs. Chris Jericho

Original: D+

Redo: D+

Edge vs. Rey Mysterio

Original: A-

Redo: C+

Jeff Hardy vs. Randy Orton

Original: C-

Redo: C+

Royal Rumble

Original: C-

Redo: C+

Overall Rating

Original: C+

Redo: C-

Wow the Smackdown title match really changed things around here.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/27/royal-rumble-count-up-2008-screw-wwes-list-this-is-the-1-rumble-moment/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of the History of Wrestlemania at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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# Thunder – August 23, 2000: Everybody Hates Disco

## Thunder

Date: August 23, 2000

Location: Tulsa Convention Center, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Attendance: 2,811

Commentators: Stevie Ray, Mike Tenay, Tony Schiavone

We're coming up on Fall Brawl with Nash vs. Booker T. for the title in a match that actually makes sense on paper. They're making Booker out to be a giant killer so a win over Nash should be a good thing for his run. Now of course that brings up the issue of Nash ever doing what makes sense for the company as I'm sure Goldberg can tell you about. Let's get to it.

Chuck Palumbo comes into Cat's office and wants to be in the main event. That's exactly what he gets, as part of a tag match with Kevin Nash against Booker T. and whoever Booker can find (this company LOVES itself some mystery partners). Well at least they're doing something with one of the new guys so points for that. Ms. Jones leaves, saying she has to take care of something.

## Kwee Wee vs. Corporal Cajun

Paisley sits in on commentary because managing doesn't mean anything anymore. Cajun gets in some right hands and a dropkick to start but dives into a powerbomb as Kwee Wee's offense continues to surprise. A slam (ok so he's not always great) gets two and it's off to a camel clutch as Kwee Wee (I can't bring myself to use either half of his name) is showing some thinking by working on the back. That goes nowhere and Kwee Wee misses a middle rope legdrop to give Cajun a breather.

Back up and the Corporal does his stupid dancing punches to send Kwee Wee outside. After the Misfits take a chair away, Kwee Wee heads back inside, only to be backdropped right back to the floor. Cajun whips him into the barricade and gets slapped by Paisley for his efforts. Tony: "I'm with you girl." Back in and Cajun gets two off a belly to belly but his headscissors is countered into a faceplant (think Dalton Castle's Bang A Rang if you're an ROH fan) for the quick pin.

**Rating:** C. Leave it to WCW to put one of their better young talents with a gimmick that is going to destroy his career. Kwee Wee has been a very nice surprise since he debuted a few weeks back and he's actually making it work in the ring as well. This youth movement is going somewhere and it's nice to see for a change.

Post match Paisley and Gunns get in a brawl because they're women in 2000 WCW and that's all they know how to do.

Back from a break with Paisley and Gunns still fighting until they challenge each other for later.

Ms. Jones comes up to Team Canada and makes Storm vs. Rection vs. Awesome for the US Title tonight. Storm isn't pleased but it goes nowhere.

Here are the Natural Born Thrillers with something to say, starting with Sanders getting in his athletically stacked and genetically jacked lines. They were THIS close to winning the World and Tag Team Titles on Monday but various things got in the way. Cue the Filthy Animals with Konnan making a lot of jokes that are quickly censored. Some hero. Disqo wants Sanders tonight but before we can get an answer, Vito runs in and beats

the Thrillers down with his stick ball bat. The Thrillers fight back because it's just a stick but the Animals come in and clear them out.

Booker goes to see how Vito is and winds up getting him as a partner in the main event. That's quite the jump up for Vito.

Sanders (in a different shirt than he was wearing in the ring because WCW's production staff sucks) comes in to see Cat and wants a match with Disco's career on the line. He even gets all evil by insulting James Brown. That's enough for Cat, but he can't put Disco's career on the line because of his contract. Then what was the point of this?

Crowbar has candy and flowers for Daffney, but it turns out that she already went out with her secret admirer last night. Of course she can't actually tell Crowbar what his name is but he'll be here later. Crowbar caves in and says the flowers and candy were from the admirer. Again, this works way too well for what they're doing.

#### Harris Twins vs. Jung Dragons

So yeah, after nearly killing themselves in that ladder match, this is the Dragons' reward. That sums up WCW so well and it's really sad to see. Ron no sells Yang's dropkick to start so Kaz comes in with a kick off the top to actually stagger the twin. That's about it though as Ron kicks Jamie-san in the face and it's a double H-Bomb for the pin on Yang. I'm sure the Dragons will have another good cruiserweight match soon and look awesome and then this will happen all over again. It says a lot when hooking up with Nidia and becoming a redneck was a huge upgrade for Jamie Noble.

Post match Kaz takes another H-Bomb until Kronik comes out for the save. This brings out Leia Meow to yell at the Dragons and take them to the back.

Skipper says he has Storm's back.

MI Smooth talks to Norman Smiley about their Hardcore Title match. For no apparent reason (save for it makes the joke work), it's going to be I Quit so Norman can give up immediately and lose the title.

## Crowbar vs. Reno

Daffney is all happy while Crowbar is depressed. Reno slugs away on him but Crowbar gets in some basic stuff, followed by a legdrop between the legs and a slingshot legdrop for two. Back up and Reno starts working on the arm, including lifting him up in an arm trap suplex. That earns Reno a jawbreaker as this is pretty back and forth so far. As the match is going on, Tony gets word that we'll be having a wedding between David Flair and Miss Hancock on September 11. Oh geez I don't want to know how bad this is going to get.

Reno gets low bridged to the floor but Crowbar flips over after him, only to hold on to the ropes so he can kick Reno in the head and then skin the cat. Well that was cool. A Vader Bomb off the barricade sets up a Lionsault back inside for two as the match is getting better. Naturally that means it's time to go off the rails as Daffney freaks out because here's her secret admirer....who looks exactly like Crowbar. Daffney runs up and hugs him, distraction Crowbar so Reno can Roll the Dice for the pin.

**Rating:** C-. Of course. Instead of using one of the several dozen wrestlers on your roster, you bring in someone who looks like Crowbar because it's funny or something. Either that or this is something that happened to Russo when he was a teenager and he needs to find a way to get it out of his system. Almost everything else involving a woman seems to be.

Crowbar gets beaten down until the look-a-like makes the save.

Nash tells Palumbo to take care of Vito and Booker.

Booker and Vito decide to take care of Nash and Palumbo.

Lieutenant Loco tries to get Disco's career on the line as well. I think we've got a running joke here.

Tank Abbott fires 3 Count but makes them his partners in an eight man tag tonight.

This week's sitdown interview is with....Midajah, who is in a neck brace

after the attack by Goldberg last week. So this one is in character I guess? She got her start in fitness modeling but didn't want to make her career by taking her clothes off in Playboy. Tenay says she's a small woman in a man's world but Midajah doesn't want to hear it. Tenay: "Yeah I've heard it before. I am woman hear me roar right?"

Midajah talks about saving Tenay from Steiner's attack a few weeks ago but Mike thinks she only did it to keep Steiner from being fined. That's enough for Midajah as she calls Tenay a jerk and ends the interview. Tenay: "Good luck to you and your future in sports entertainment honey. You're going to need it." This really accomplished nothing, as I'm sure you expected. At least it didn't make everyone feel stupid though so it's getting better. Well that and making Tenay look like a jerk, which I'm sure makes him the face in this scene.

The Natural Born Thrillers jump Booker and Vito....who easily fight them off with stick ball bats. These aren't the brightest rookies.

Norman is really happy about getting to lose the title (why doesn't he just vacate it?) when he runs into the Dark Carnival. Muta hits him in the throat and I'm sure you get the idea here.

### 3 Count/Tank Abbott vs. Dark Carnival

Before the match, Tank makes the three of them leave so he can sing a bit. Stevie doesn't get the difference between a gigolo and a juggalo. Tank stands in a different corner than his partners as Shane is LAUNCHED across the ring with a release powerbomb. Vampiro kicks Evan in the face so Karagias sends him to the floor for a nice springboard plancha. Everything breaks down and the referee gets misted.

Tank is standing around watching all this happen as the Clowns double team Shannon with a Samoan drop into a guillotine legdrop. Now Tank comes in to start cleaning house, only to have 3 Count beat him down with baseball bats. Muta adds the moonsault for the pin. That's it for Tank (at least in the ring) and I'm actually going to miss him. The guy is such a trainwreck that he's fun to watch.

Skipper is on the phone with someone and says Awesome is in, meaning it's

going to be Rection against both of them tonight. Rection overhears.

Booker and Vito are ready for tonight.

Paisley challenges Gunns again. Did they forget already?

#### Hardcore Title: MI Smooth vs. Norman Smiley

Smiley is defending and this is an I Quit match. The bell rings and Norman lays down but can't speak because of Muta hitting him in the throat. Smooth doesn't get it and "hits" him with some stuff before actually hitting him with some stuff. Norman still can't talk so Smooth pounds on him even more, only to have Smiley start fighting back out of self defense. A low blow with a kendo stick stops Smooth and Norman gets in his dancing, followed by a few trashcan shots. Smooth runs him over with a clothesline and a running seated senton. Smooth: "SAY I QUIT!" Referee: "What did you say???" Norman retains.

**Rating:** D. I remember watching this when it aired and yeah it's kind of funny. It's annoying that this is what Norman is stuck doing because they have no idea what else to do with him but at least they're giving us some funny ideas. The problem here though is Norman has to lose the thing eventually and I have a feeling there will be a lot more jokes before we finally get to that point.

Skipper is on the phone again and says Rection took the money, making it Awesome who will be down two on one. As you might expect, Awesome overhears this and is livid.

Now Okerlund is trying to get Disco's career on the line, offering Viagra as a reward. That goes nowhere so he offers money, only to get thrown out.

#### Paisley vs. Major Gunns

Tygress is out for commentary but realizes she's here for the wrong match, only to stay anyway. Tygress: "Tony you want to get a little filthy with me later?" It's a catfight to start with Paisley talking a lot of trash. A handspring elbow crushes Gunns in the corner and it's back to the catfight stuff. Gunns gets in a horrible looking slap but

Tygress gets on the apron for a forearm, knocking her into a rollup to give Paisley the pin.

The Filthy Animals can't get Disqo's career on the line either. They leave Cat's office and most of the locker room is waiting outside to be disappointed. Again, kind of funny.

Skipper tells Storm that the plan worked. Thanks for clarifying that for us.

#### Mike Sanders vs. Disqo Inferno

Remember that Disqo's career is NOT on the line. For some reason Disqo sends the Animals to the back before elbowing Sanders out to the floor. Disqo actually follows up by sending him into the barricade a few times to keep Sanders in trouble. Back in and Sanders grabs a quick hot shot to send Disqo right back to the floor.

Mike slowly pounds away and grabs a suplex for two. He isn't exactly strong on offense yet. Disqo fights up with all of his usual stuff, capped off by the Last Dance. Cue the Thrillers to attack the Animals (standing on the ramp) as Disqo gets two off a DDT. He tries it again, only to get reversed into the 3.0 to give Mike the pin.

**Rating:** D+. Better match than you would expect here as Disqo is right there in the Kwee Wee camp: a talented in ring guy who never had a chance to be taken seriously because of how stupid his gimmick really was. At least he got in some stuff here and wound up with a pretty nice career despite all those years of being stuck with a comedy character.

Nash yells at Palumbo because the Thrillers screwed up with Vito and Booker. Based on this, I'm thinking they're totally fine.

#### US Title: Lance Storm vs. General Rection vs. Mike Awesome

Storm is defending, it's one fall to a finish and both challengers think the other is in league with Lance. Before the match, Storm says he may have misjudged us. He was watching some of the political campaigning and there are some lofty goals in this country. Of course, those goals have already been accomplished in Canada. Therefore, the true American Dream

(Storm: "If you will.") is to become Canadian.

Mike and Rection get in each others' faces before punching Storm because they're actually smart. After a botched double clothesline, Rection holds Storm's legs for an Awesome Splash. They switch places with Rection hitting a top rope elbow, followed by a pop up sitout powerbomb from Awesome.

Storm manages to stop both in a charge but there goes the referee. Cue Elix Skipper (who was clearly halfway to the ring before the ref got bumped, though it's understandable given how badly Storm was getting destroyed) to low bridge Awesome and knock Rection out with the ring. The Maple Leaf on the unconscious Rection retains the title.

**Rating:** D+. Dang it WCW, cut this stuff out. They set up a nice little story with Skipper trying to play both guys but getting caught. Ok, that's fine. That's an idea that could go somewhere, especially before a triple threat. Instead of letting this story build up to a pay per view match with both guys thinking the other is evil (like Summerslam 92), they blow it off on the same night in a meaningless three minute match with interference from Skipper.

Stevie goes to be with his brother before this match.

#### Big Vito/Booker T. vs. Kevin Nash/Chuck Palumbo

Jarrett is on commentary despite not having anything to do with any of these people. Vito comes out first and is promptly beaten down, only to have Booker run in for the save. We officially start with Vito pounding on Palumbo before it's off to Nash who gets some of the same from the stereotypical Italian.

That's enough of that for Nash as he kicks Vito in the face to take over, just like he did on Monday. It's time for Vito to get slowly beaten down as you would expect with Palumbo getting in some good ring time of his own. We get the required tag behind the referee's back, meaning Booker is sent back to the apron. You really would think that would stop happening at some point over the years.

Not that it matters as Vito clotheslines Chuck down and tags out anyway, allowing Booker to come in and pound on Nash. Everything breaks down and Jarrett gets in the ring with the guitar (of course) to go after Booker's knee, just as the Thrillers come in to beat down Vito as the show goes off the air.

**Rating:** D. This got more time than I was expecting but as soon as Jarrett was out there you knew the ending was going to be screwy. Ok to be fair you knew that as soon as you started watching a WCW show. I'm glad that Palumbo got in some offense but he could have been any of the Thrillers here.

**Overall Rating:** D. Some of this show's one off ideas worked quite well for some short term comedy but I still have no desire to see much of the upcoming stuff (oddly enough save for Booker vs. Nash, which could be watchable). These shows are so much easier to sit through when they're treated like wrestling shows (albeit infused with some comedy) instead of all the shooting that Nitro has throughout. It's still not good, but this is much more dull than awful, which I'll take in this case. Oh and no Goldberg in the city where he was born. Nice job guys.

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# 2015 Awards: Worst Match of the Year

It's not the Divas for once.

This is actually a tricky one as it depends more on your definition of the word "worst". So often, a match that is described as the worst is really more boring than anything else. It's kind of rare to have a match that really is horrible, but often times boring is a lot worse than bad. Therefore, your mileage might vary here.

We'll start with a match that actually was bad, at least in its booking: Seth Rollins vs. Brock Lesnar from Night of Champions. This was a nine minute squash with Brock squashing the champ and then a screwy finish as Undertaker came back to get revenge for a match he lost clean a year and a half ago. The story made sense, but I see no need to have the World Champion get DESTROYED to get there. At least have Seth cheat to get in some offense or something, but don't have him get beaten down that badly. He's the World Champion for a reason.

Then we have a match that might take this one running away: TNA's Gauntlet for the Gold at Bound For Glory. No matter how you look at this, it was a twenty four minute Royal Rumble with 12 names (one of which was Pope, who eliminated himself), including Mahabali Shera, Chris Melendez, Tommy Dreamer, Aiden O'Shea and the winner, earning a World Title shot at some point in the future, Tyrus. This was stupid booking (setting up Tyrus as a title contender), stupid planning (the show never recovered after this mess) and just bad in general. We'll come back to this idea in a bit.

We'll go back to the mess at TripleMania XXIII with Los Villanos vs. Los Psycho Circus. This was the Villanos' (youngest member: 50) retirement match as a trio and the match made them look older than their ages. The match was a disaster and the technical issues weren't any help either. However, I can put this one lower on the bad list because what was supposed to happen here? One team is over 150 years old combined so what

are they supposed to really do out there? Yeah it's a disaster, but it's a disaster that I feel sorry for.

One more thing before we get to the worst match: I've seen a lot of loathing for the Intercontinental Title Elimination Chamber match. I really don't get this as I found the match to be totally watchable. It's completely forgettable and was boring at times, but one of the worst matches of the year? Really? The right guy won, the lineup was decent enough and the match wasn't horrible. I really don't get the hate for this as it's really more middle of the road than bad.

Then there's the match that I think you know is coming: the Royal Rumble. This was the 1993 version all over again as everyone in the arena knew Reigns (Yokozuna) was winning and Daniel Bryan (Undertaker), the only person with a prayer of eliminating him, was taken out early, leaving the crowd to be bored for the rest of the match.

On top of that, you had what looked like a hot finish with a bunch of promising talent in there near the end. Here's the final ten in the match: Reigns, Rusev, Big Show, Kane, Ambrose, Wyatt, Ziggler, Cesaro, Barrett and Swagger. Save for Big Show and Kane, that could be one heck of a hot finish as the new generation shows that they can take this thing over.

And never mind as Big Show and Kane took out Swagger, Ziggler, Wyatt and Ambrose before being dumped by Reigns at the same time in a moment that was done way better when Shawn Michaels eliminated Yokozuna and Vader in 1996 (a good way to do a Rumble where everyone knew who was winning).

This was a complete disaster with the Rock not even able to save it. Unfortunately this continued Reigns' push to the main event of Wrestlemania WAY before people wanted to see it (though at least they were smart enough to not pull the trigger just yet). The match was just boring throughout and saves the Gauntlet for the Gold by having so many of the same problems but at over double the time. This one wins and I'm almost scared to look at it again for the redo.

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