

Fastlane 2016: The Scenic Route To Wrestlemania

Fastlane 2016

Date: February 21, 2016

Location: Quicken Loans Arena, Cleveland, Ohio

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

It's the second pay per view of the year as we're getting closer and closer to Wrestlemania. In this case we have a triple threat main event of Dean Ambrose vs. Brock Lesnar vs. Roman Reigns for the #1 contendership in what should be one heck of a fight. Any of the three could win and that's what can make this even better. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: US Title: Kalisto vs. Alberto Del Rio

Kalisto is defending and this is 2/3 falls. Del Rio goes right after the arm to start but Kalisto kicks away at the knees for a breather. JBL talks about how Goliath wins in real life as Kalisto hits the hurricanrana driver to set up a big dive out to the floor. Back in and Del Rio gets two off a snap suplex with Ranallo (only calling the pre-show) comparing this to a feud between rappers. Kalisto sends him into the post but Del Rio blasts him with a chair for the DQ, giving Kalisto the first fall at 4:05.

For some reason the second fall doesn't being immediately so Del Rio whips him all around ringside as we take a break. Back with both guys in the ring and Del Rio demanding that the second fall begin. Well I mean Kalisto has only had about three and a half minutes to recover so maybe they should. Del Rio does a standing version of the double stomp in the corner for the pin at 7:35.

The third fall begins less than a minute after the second ends with Del Rio getting two off a clothesline. The full version of the top rope double stomp is countered with a hurricanrana though and Kalisto speeds things up with the corkscrew cross body. Another hurricanrana driver gets two and a running tornado DDT gets the same for the champion. Kalisto

gets crotched on top and actually doesn't counter the reverse superplex into the Salida Del Sol.

Instead Del Rio sends him out to the floor for another double stomp off the barricade. Kalisto dives back in to beat the count at nine and Del Rio is frustrated. He loads up ANOTHER top rope stomp (as in like the fifth one of the match) but Kalisto moves away. They go for what was supposed to be the Salida Del Sol but can't quite get it, leaving Kalisto to send Del Rio into the buckle for a rollup pin at 14:30.

Rating: C-. I really wasn't feeling this one as it felt like they were trying to showcase how many different ways Del Rio could do that one stupid move in a row. On top of that, Kalisto doesn't even get to hit his big finishing move that made him a star in the first place and basically gets squashed until a fluke ending. I'm really not sure why this needed to be 2/3 falls and the match was a step down from their usually good stuff.

The opening video is the Eva Marie racecar theme with a focus on the main event.

Sasha Banks/Becky Lynch vs. Tamina/Naomi

Earlier today, Naomi said she and Tamina put the BAD in Team BAD. Never let her speak again. Becky tries to start but Sasha tags herself in, only to have Becky do the same thing a few seconds later. The quick legdrops nail Tamina with the spinning version getting two. Naomi comes in for her dancing kicks but Becky throws Tamina down with a suplex and BAD gets dropped on the floor. Naomi comes back with something like a Stunner over the top rope to drop Becky. Unfortunately this means we have to hear the racecar sound effects on every replay which are already old.

Back in and Tamina clotheslines Lynch for two before it's off to the chinlock. JBL: "Tamina could have been in the APA." It's off to Naomi for a legdrop and chinlock of her own before being sent back to the floor. Naomi pulls Sasha off the apron to break up a tag attempt, only to have Becky do some quick house cleaning and dive over for the hot tag to Sasha. It's time for the knees all around until Naomi misses the double knees in the corner.

A backstabber sets up the Bank Statement but Tamina pulls Sasha out to the floor. Back in and the Rear View gets two, followed by Tamina's superkick for the same with Becky breaking up the count. Sasha flips out of a double suplex and Becky comes in with a missile dropkick to both of them. The Bank Statement to Tamina and the Disarm-Her to Naomi are good for the double submission at 10:00.

Rating: C. This picked up a lot near the end but the first half was a lot of laying around in chinlocks and rest holds as we sat through Tamina and Naomi trying to have charisma. Naomi is one of those cases where you have to wonder what they were thinking. She's incredibly athletic but for some reason they decide to make her a heel instead of focusing on all of her national abilities. Such is life in the Divas division.

We look back at the Intercontinental Title changing hands on Monday.

Intercontinental Title: Dolph Ziggler vs. Kevin Owens

Owens is defending and Dolph's hair is....odd. They fight up against the ropes to start and Ziggler eats a headbutt. Owens' chinlock is countered into something like a rear naked choke as we hear again about Ziggler's amateur background which he almost never uses. Back up and Ziggler throws him HARD into the buckle for an awkward looking landing. You can tell it's awkward as they show four replays of the thing.

We hit the chinlock from the champion until Ziggler avoids a charge, sending Owens shoulder first into the post. The rapid fire elbow drops get two for Dolph and Owens crotches him on the ropes to break up the running DDT. The Cannonball gets two, causing the champion to yell at Cole for talking bad about him. Now the DDT connects for two and Dolph loads up a superplex, only to have Kevin reverse into that spinning fisherman's superplex.

Both guys roll outside with Ziggler superkicking him down for a near ten count. Back in and they trade more superkicks with Owens having to kick out at two and a half. JBL: "We're at a superkick party!" They go outside again with the apron powerbomb being countered into a hurricanrana to send Owens into the steps. Back in again and Ziggler tunes up the band (which apparently is paying homage to Shawn Michaels because everything

has to be), only to nearly kick the referee, allowing the Pop Up Powerbomb to retain Owens' title at 15:02.

Rating: B-. Just a longer version of any given match they've had on Raw in recent months (and by recent I mean several because these guys fight like once every few weeks) with the obvious and logical ending. They tried to pump up the idea of Ziggler in front of his hometown but even then people stopped caring a long time ago. Could it be because Ziggler has been the same guy for years now?

We recap the Wyatts being all evil and attacking the old guys, which of course includes that old rascal Ryback.

Wyatt Family vs. Kane/Big Show/Ryback

Bray is on the floor, sitting in Byron Saxton's chair. Ryback and Rowan get things going with the bearded one missing a charge in the corner. It's off to Big Show for the loud chops on Erick's exposed chest with Ryback coming in again for some of his own. Rowan elbows Ryback down and the tag brings in Harper for a dropkick of all things.

We get the Strowman appearance as the announcers hit all of their standard lines about how big and strong he really is. Like, really, really strong. Braun throws Ryback around and brings Rowan back in, allowing Ryback to hit a quick suplex. The hot tag brings in Kane as Cole brings up the Wyatts abducting Kane a few months back. Yeah remember that? It's still every bit as stupid. Kane cleans house for a bit until they get him down in the corner to start the slow motion exchanges.

Braun drops an elbow to the back of the head as we get a Bill Kazmeier name drop. A running boot misses in the corner and the hot tag brings in Ryback to clean house. Ryback slams Harper five times in a row (Cole: "This is incredible!" No Cole, it isn't.) before powerslamming him for good measure. Everything breaks down and Strowman is sent to the floor with Harper being tossed on top of his partners. Show spears (kind of) Strowman and Ryback Meathooks Harper. A Shell Shock (really a Samoan Drop) is enough to pin Harper at 10:36.

Rating: C. What? No really, what? There was no reason to have the Wyatts

lose here and you have a team of makeshift goons go over them here? For what? Well at least Ryback got the pin and Bray didn't....yeah this isn't working for me. I mean, how in the world do you have the Wyatts lose here? I honestly do not get this and I really don't want to imagine where they're going next.

Roman Reigns talks about how everything changes tonight between himself and Ambrose. Dean comes in and says they're both going to Wrestlemania but he's tired of hitchhiking. Reigns: "I wouldn't book that trip just yet." Ambrose: "I already booked it! I got a great deal on Priceline!" Neither of them are worried about Lesnar either.

We recap Brie Bella vs. Charlotte, which is built around Daniel Bryan retiring and Charlotte mocking Brie for her husband having to quit. Brie pinned her in a non-title match to earn the shot tonight.

Divas Title: Brie Bella vs. Charlotte

Charlotte is defending and throws Brie (wearing Bryan's kick pads) down face first to start. That gets us the first mock YES chant of the match as Byron talks about Brie wanting to listen to the birds chirp, sending JBL into a hilarious rant about how stupid that sounds. Brie comes back with some forearms and an armdrag, allowing her to WOO and strut because this is really about Flair.

Charlotte sends her out to the floor for a few moments before Brie counters an Alabama Slam into a sunset flip for two. Back in and Charlotte cranks on both arms but Brie tries (and horribly fails) at a YES Lock attempt, eventually settling for a crucifix for two. A Backpack Stunner breaks up Brie's sleeper and we hit a Figure Four Neck Lock into those rolling flips. JBL: "Maybe Charlotte is just tired of the birds chirping."

The BRIE MODE running knee sets up a Nikki Bella forearm for two. Charlotte comes back with chops (because neither of them can do anything but tribute moves) but the Figure Eight is broken up. A dropkick knocks Charlotte outside, followed by a missile dropkick back inside. As is so often the case in a Flair match though, Brie comes up holding her knee.

That doesn't stop her from firing off the YES Kicks (of course), followed by a Bella Buster for two. The Figure Eight is countered into the YES Lock but Brie swaps that for a half crab to prevent Ric from interfering. Charlotte finally kicks her off and a quick Figure Eight makes Brie tap at 12:14.

Rating: C+. The match was better than it had any right to be but amazingly enough, the combined forces of Daniel Bryan and Nikki Bella weren't enough to make me care about Brie. That kind of shortcut booking rarely works for me, especially when you have someone like Brie who has been a loser and such a horrible in ring worker for so long. You can't just forget about that kind of stuff, no matter which of her relatives are hurt. But at least Charlotte got pinned clean, which of course no one is going to remember.

We recap AJ Styles vs. Chris Jericho, which is basically Sami Zayn vs. Cesaro from NXT minus the 2/3 falls stipulation because Kalisto vs. Del Rio needed to go six or seven falls. They split the first two matches and AJ convinced Jericho to do it again here tonight. This is almost guaranteed to be one of the better matches on the card.

Jericho talks about how you're only as good as your last match, which he promises to prove to AJ tonight.

AJ Styles vs. Chris Jericho

Feeling out process to start and AJ has to fight out of an early Walls attempt. Jericho has to do the same to avoid the Calf Crusher, which starts the dueling chants. AJ drops a knee for two and it's time to slug it out. A top rope ax handle drops AJ, who pops right back up with a dropkick. The chants start up again as the fans are definitely more into this than anything else all night.

They head outside with Jericho sending him hard into the barricade before slapping on a chinlock. JBL compares AJ coming over here to Kobashi or Hansen coming over from Japan in their primes. AJ fights up and sends Jericho to the floor, only to dive into a dropkick to the chest. Another chinlock doesn't get Chris very far as AJ fights back and hits a running forearm to a seated Jericho.

They mess up the moonsault into the reverse DDT (to be fair that's a really hard move to pull off) and Jericho scores with the enziguri for two. A Teshocker (belly to back suplex into a faceplant) gets two more for AJ, only to have Jericho come back with a bulldog and Lionsault for another near fall. AJ comes back and tries the springboard forearm but Jericho springboards into the dropkick to break it up. The Pele stuns Jericho on the top and AJ loads up a super hurricanrana which is countered into the Walls.

AJ gets the break so Jericho throws him outside and puts him in the Walls on the floor. A Codebreaker brings AJ back in but he's way too close to the ropes. AJ's striking sequence is countered into a tiger bomb which is countered into the Styles Clash for a very close near fall. Now it's back to the Calf Crusher and Jericho finally taps at 16:28.

Rating: B. Were you expecting anything else here? They've had good matches the previous two times and this worked as well, though I liked their Smackdown match a little bit better. Jericho tapping clean in the middle of the ring is the right ending because you can quickly build him up for whatever you want him to do at Wrestlemania while AJ can move on to a feud he might actually lose.

Post match Jericho does the false heel turn into the handshake.

Kickoff recap.

We look back at New Day dancing a lot on Smackdown.

It's time for the Cutting Edge Peep Show (as hosted by Edge and Christian of course) with special guests the New Day. Edge plugs their new show (Christian: "Watch it. It's awesome.") but asks if we can be serious for a minute (Edge: "Lance Storm just got real mad.") because it's really nice to be here. This is where the first tag team ladder match took place and it's where they received their very first standing ovation....and here's New Day.

They immediately ask who (WHO WHO WHO) cares about what Edge and Christian did back in the day. It's time to be out with the old and in with the new, the New Day that is of course. Christian wants to talk

about New Day's history, which started with the power of positivity, which was brutal and lead to indifference. Edge: "I've never seen so much chocolate act so vanilla." Then something happened even faster than Kofi dropped his fake Jamaican accent. Edge: "It's like if we had a threesome with his Beyonce, you would be our love child."

New Day is accused of ripping on local sports teams before doing just that. There's nothing wrong with an old classic. Kofi doesn't like the idea that New Day is called Edge and Christian ripoffs before going into a rant about how lame the current tag team division really is. Apparently the League of Nations doesn't think much of New Day (and apparently WWE doesn't think much of the League as they can't get onto a show with six matches). Woods says New Day has already cooked the deal and now the League of Nations is hot garbage. Edge: "I'm starting to like you guys."

This brings out the League with Sheamus agreeing that New Day does look stupid. Woods says they can't get into a battle of fisticuffs because it's a day of rest and they're leaving. Edge: "But King Barrett hasn't gotten to stare at anyone menacingly yet!" Del Rio brings up making Edge retire five years ago, though Edge thinks he's accomplished more than Alberto in those five years. The Canadians leave and it's time for New Day to dance in the aisle as Edge and Christian do one more plug. There were some funny lines here but this was even more filler on a show full of it already.

Here are the Social Outcasts with something to say. Bo gives us some safety tips on the Road to Wrestlemania before Rose calls the team a group of beautiful Priuses. Bo: "Can I be a Volvo? They have great safety ratings." They go on for a bit until it's time for an impromptu match.

R-Truth vs. Curtis Axel

Axel grabs a headlock to start but it's time for Truth to dance and gyrate. Curtis gets in a shot and we get a victory lap, only to have Goldust come out to support Truth. Goldust trips Axel but then throws Rose inside for no logical reason, allowing Axel to grab a rollup for the pin at 2:15.

Post match Truth walks away again, as he should after that stupid move.

We recap the main event, which was made basically on a whim by Stephanie, which really doesn't leave HHH with an easy match for Wrestlemania. They've teased some issues between Reigns and Ambrose and both guys want to fight Lesnar again. Lesnar has stared at HHH, at least when the champion had the time to appear on a show with the belt.

Roman Reigns vs. Dean Ambrose vs. Brock Lesnar

Winner gets the title shot at Wrestlemania so we get some Big Match Intros. Brock drives Ambrose into the corner before throwing Reigns with the first suplex. A second German suplex sends Reigns flying but Dean comes back in with a missile dropkick to stagger Brock. Dean tries a German suplex on Brock but gets a hard glare and a belly to belly for his efforts.

Ambrose gets dropped on his head and it's back to Suplex City for Reigns. The fourth German sets up an F5 with Ambrose making the save. Lesnar chuckles at Dean, who slaps Brock in the face. That earns Dean a series of knees to the ribs and a German of his own. The fans, who seem to like Ambrose, want to see more suplexes. The F5 is broken up by a spear to give Reigns two but he Superman Punches Brock to the floor. Reigns dives into an F5, only to have Dean hit Lesnar low to make the save.

A DoubleBomb through the table (good looking one too) puts Brock through the table, leaving Reigns and Ambrose to have a fight for the title shot. Dean's bulldog gets two and we get the B00/YAY slugout. The Rebound Lariat drops Reigns and Brock is almost to his feet. He feels like a boss in a video game at this point. Reigns and Ambrose are smart enough to go after Brock and drive him into the barricade to keep him in trouble.

That means it's time for a second table and a second DoubleBomb. This time they bury Brock underneath the pieces of the table but Reigns punches Dean in the jaw, drawing even more booing. Back in and Dean dives into a Superman Punch but the spear is blocked with a knee. Dirty Deeds gets a very close two and Dean POINTS TO THE SIGN.

Another Dirty Deeds is countered as Reigns lifts Dean to his shoulders....and Brock comes back in to German suplex both of them at the same time. Brock is spent though and Reigns nails a spear, only to get

caught in the Kimura. Dean finally comes in with a series of chair shots to Brock's back, followed by some more to Reigns. Roman pops up with a spear to Ambrose for the pin and the title shot at 16:47.

Rating: B. Where's the last five minutes of this? They were starting in on something with the chair and then Reigns just speared Dean for the win. Brock was treated better here and looked like a star but I'm still mostly over the German suplexes. At least the Wyatts didn't interfere, which is pretty much what most people (certainly myself included) figured would happen. Good match but the ending was really sudden.

Reigns gets a lot of pyro until HHH comes out for the staredown to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. The show had good action and the wrestling was much better than I was expecting but sweet goodness it felt long. So much of this stuff felt like it was being packed in because they NEEDED a pay per view this month. If nothing else, hopefully this teaches WWE (HA!) that airing matches over and over on TV before the pay per view isn't a good booking method. Watchable show and even good at times but I'm never going to want to watch this again.

Results

Becky Lynch/Sasha Banks b. Naomi/Tamina – Bank Statement to Tamina

Kevin Owens b. Dolph Ziggler – Pop Up Powerbomb

Ryback/Big Show/Kane b. Wyatt Family – Shell Shock to Harper

Charlotte b. Brie Bella – Figure Eight

AJ Styles b. Chris Jericho – Calf Crusher

Roman Reigns b. Brock Lesnar and Dean Ambrose – Spear to Ambrose

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of the Complete Monday Nitro Reviews Volume IV at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B01AXP08DK>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

Royal Rumble 2016: This Rumble Game Thing

Royal Rumble 2016

Date: January 24, 2016

Location: Amway Center, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

It's time to start the Road to Wrestlemania and it's never started on this hot of a note. This year it's all about the World Title as Roman Reigns is defending the title in the Royal Rumble itself for the first time ever. That leaves a lot of possible options open and with Reigns starting at #1, there could be a lot of drama by the end. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Darren Young/Damien Sandow vs. Ascension vs. Dudley Boyz vs. Mark Henry/Jack Swagger

One fall to a finish and the winning team gets spots in the Rumble. Swagger and Young get things going but it's quickly off to Henry as the fans want Sandow. That changes into a "HEY! WE WANT SOME SANDOW!" chants and that's exactly what they get, including the Wind-Up Elbow for two on Jack. Konnor tags himself in and it's a big four way standoff as we take a break.

Back with Swagger holding Konnor in a chinlock but D-Von tags himself in, only to get stomped down in the corner. Konnor puts D-Von in a chinlock

as the fans want Sexual Chocolate. D-Von avoids a charge and it's a double tag to Bubba and Viktor with the former cleaning house. A Rock Bottom gets two on Viktor and Young takes What's Up, meaning it's table time. Actually scratch that as a 3D gets two on Viktor with Swagger making a fast save. Henry splashes D-Von and covers Viktor for the pin and the Rumble spots at 7:58.

Rating: D+. This was fine and the right team won. There's no point in putting a thrown together team or either regular team in there so go with the two former World Champions. Neither of them have a chance of winning but at least they add a bit more prestige to the lineup. The match was just there but that's all it was supposed to be.

Vince and Stephanie arrive before the opening video with Vince saying (while stooping down to be on JoJo's height) they're going to give Reigns an opportunity to do something unheard of tonight. Vince loves this night, almost as much as he loves himself. Pretty pointless scene but good night Vince is a ball of energy.

The opening video focuses on the statues before going into a regular video all about Reigns being up against the entire roster tonight.

Intercontinental Title: Dean Ambrose vs. Kevin Owens

Owens is challenging in his rematch from TLC and this is last man standing. It's a brawl to start with Owens taking an early bulldog to send him outside. Dean sends him over the announcers' table with a suicide dive with Cole being wiped out by Kevin. Owens hits the champ in the ribs with an iPad so Dean whips him into the steps for four. It's already kendo stick time and Cole is suddenly a huge Ambrose fan.

Owens comes back with a Cannonball to drive Ambrose through the barricade for a nine. They head inside and the fans sound like they're mainly on Owens' side. The backslash keeps Dean in trouble and it's time to throw in a bunch of chairs. A chair to the back drops Ambrose again but Owens has a seat instead of following up. The Rebound Lariat puts Owens down but Dean has to counter the Pop Up Powerbomb with a backdrop through the chairs.

Kevin bails to the floor but suckers Dean in for some hard whips into the steps and a seven count. It's table time (fan: "I feel like you're wasting your time right now!") as Dean is laying on the apron, which should earn him a count. Owens stacks up two tables on top of each other in front of a post but gets a chair pelted at his face. It hangs around his neck so Dean starts punching the chair until it falls off. That's not the brightest thing in the world champ.

The Pop Up Powerbomb is countered with a hurricanrana and Dean grabs Dirty Deeds for eight. Dirty Deeds onto the chair has Owens in trouble but he rolls outside and onto his feet to break the count before collapsing. Dean loads up another table at ringside ("HEY! WE WANT SOME TABLES!") and drops the top rope elbow for a double eight count. We get yet another table in the ring and they trade shouts of I HATE YOU.

Ambrose loads up a superplex through the table but Owens reverses into the fisherman's superplex for the big crash. They're both back up again so Owens grabs a hard Pop Up Powerbomb for nine and a half, only to have Dean collapse at 9.6. Frustration sets in for Owens as he loads up all the chairs and goes up, allowing Dean to shove him off the top and through the double tables at ringside for the win to retain at 20:21.

Rating: B. Good but certainly not great last man standing match. The double tables were clearly going to be the ending and it was just a matter of time instead of a big surprise at the end. It was good enough though and all it needed to be, though I was hoping Owens would get the title back. However, it leaves the door open for a big match at Wrestlemania which is the important thing.

We recap the destruction of Francesca the Trombone. That's a really odd statement if you're reading this a long time from now. In other words it's time for the Tag Team Titles.

Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. Usos

New Day (Kofi/Big E.) is defending and Kofi asks for a moment of silence, allowing Woods to debut Francesca II. Yes Xavier will miss Francesca but he has, ahem, needs. As for tonight, one of them will also win the Rumble because 2016 will be the year of all gold everything. Thankfully the Usos

have the different color boots on again.

Kofi and Jimmy get things going with Kofi missing his reverse leapfrog, allowing Jimmy to throw him down. It's off to Jey as we have a discussion of Byron's street cred. Big E. comes in and sends Jey shoulder first into the post to take over. It's back to Kofi to pummel away in the corner as Woods rants about being in the match as well. The fans want Woods to play Francesca but Woods says not so fast.

Both guys try superkicks (shocking I know) but Kofi pulls Jey down by the leg so Big E. can get in a splash. A slingshot stomp crushes Jey again but he enziguris Kofi off the apron and out to the floor for a nice crash. Jimmy gets the tag and starts cleaning house with a Samoan Drop and Whisper in the Wind getting two on Big E. Everything breaks down and Big E. knocks Jimmy off the top, setting up a belly to belly for two of his own.

Jey dives off the apron (out of the WWE Universe according to Cole) to take Kofi out, followed by Big E. spearing Jimmy through the apron in an always cool looking spot. Back in and the Midnight Hour is broken up, allowing Jimmy to superkick Kofi into a very quiet Superfly Splash. Woods makes the save though, earning himself a suicide dive from Jey. Back in and Jey superkicks Kofi down but misses a blind tag to Big E., allowing the Big Ending to pull Jey out of the air for the Big Ending to retain the titles at 10:54.

Rating: C+. This picked up a bit at the end but the tag division is at such a weak point right now that it's hard to get excited about a match we've seen a few times already. I don't know if they think the Usos getting the titles back is going to be a big deal but this never felt important or really anything more than just a regular title defense.

We recap the Highlight Reel from Monday and the ensuing chaos.

The Wyatts talk about slaughtering the Beast and the Chosen One. Tonight they slaughter them all on their way to the title. Then he really will have the whole world in his hands. Run.

US Title: Alberto Del Rio vs. Kalisto

Del Rio is defending and this is the rubber match because WWE can't count to four. They've traded the title in recent weeks with Del Rio's League of Nations teammates beating Kalisto down three days earlier on Smackdown. Kalisto hammers away in the corner to start but gets kicked in the chest for two. Del Rio rains down some right hands in the corner but gets kicked in the back to knock him out to the floor.

We get another suicide dive to take the champ out but he knocks Kalisto off the top with an enziguri. A chinlock gives both guys a breather before the tilt-a-whirl backbreaker drops Kalisto again. They head outside again so Kalisto can snap off a hurricanrana. Byron: "Kalisto looked up to guys like Rey Mysterio and Eddie Guerrero." JBL: "He looks up to everybody Byron. He's short!"

Del Rio whips him into the barricade and it's time to go for the mask, which you know is enough to start a comeback. That's quickly cut off by the low superkick for two but Del Rio misses another running enziguri. A very nice tornado DDT gets two for Kalisto and there's the corkscrew crossbody. The hurricanrana driver gets two more but Kalisto takes too long going up, allowing Del Rio to reverse superplex to connect for two.

They botch a sunset bomb but Kalisto turns into a quick rollup for two more anyway in a close enough save. The top rope double stomp misses and a springboard Salida Del Sol gets two more with Alberto grabbing the bottom rope. Kalisto tries a springboard but lands on two knees for a unique counter. Del Rio would rather take the turnbuckle pad off though, only to be sent face first into the steel. A quick Salida Del Sol gives Kalisto the title back at 11:30.

Rating: C. This didn't have nearly the surprise and shock factor that the first title change did but at least they got it back on Kalisto for a good moment. He's more interesting as champion by default after Del Rio's boring time with the belt so why not do something here to give us a nice moment? Another good match as this show is on a roll so far.

Kickoff recap.

Paul Heyman comes in to see Stephanie and the disgust is quickly on. Heyman talks about Brock winning the title tonight with just ten weeks

before we go to Wrestlemania. He promises that Brock will eliminate the entire Wyatt Family tonight but all Stephanie cares about is Reigns being eliminated. If Brock gets rid of him, Stephanie will gradually renegotiate Lesnar's deal, which is all Heyman wanted.

Ad for Edge and Christian's Network show.

Fastlane ad.

We recap Charlotte vs. Becky Lynch. They were friends but Charlotte freaked out after losing to Becky, triggering a heel turn as Charlotte wanted to be more like her dad. Becky tricked Ric Flair into setting this up by implying that Charlotte was a coward.

Divas Title: Becky Lynch vs. Charlotte

Charlotte is defending. Becky takes her to the mat to start but can't get the arm this early. An armdrag sends Charlotte into the corner as they're sprinkling in some Steamboat vs. Flair. The Figure Four doesn't work so Charlotte cranks on an armbar of her own. The fans are entirely behind Becky here but Charlotte takes over with some good old cheating from her dad, who kisses Becky to distract her.

Back in and a suplex gets two for the champ and we hit the figure four neck lock with Charlotte slamming her face first into the mat. The hold stays on for a long time until Becky fights up with some running clotheslines. Becky forearm out of the Figure Eight and grabs a t-bone suplex for two. The running legdrops set up another t-bone but Charlotte hits a quick spear to take over again.

Becky is sat on top but grabs Charlotte's arm and rolls into an armbreaker. That's countered into a pretty impressive powerbomb for two more as Flair's cheerleading gets louder and louder. Back up and Charlotte baseball slides her dad by mistake, allowing Becky to grab the Disarm-Her. Ric throws his coat onto Becky's face though to break up the hold (and somehow not draw a DQ). Another spear retains Charlotte's title at 12:37.

Rating: C-. As usual, the Divas are hurt by too many rest holds and WAY

too much Ric Flair. This is getting into the Evolution format from thirteen years ago when it was already old. Not a great match here, which is a shame considering what these two are capable of doing. Just stop with the rest holds and the Ric and things will get better overnight.

Post match Charlotte beats Becky down even more until Sasha Banks comes out (on her own thank goodness)....and kicks Becky to the floor. Sasha says she wants the title but waits until Ric leaves before putting on the Bank Statement. Somehow Flair doesn't notice this for a bit, despite the fans going NUTS for it.

Some fans won a tour of the Performance Center from Chex Mix.

Rumble by the Numbers video. Good night they're stretching the heck out of this.

WWE World Title: Royal Rumble

Roman Reigns is defending and is coming in at #1 with ninety second intervals. The fans instantly boo Reigns to continue their tradition. It's Rusev in at #2 as we get the final two from last year starting this year. They slug it out to start and Rusev elbows out of a Samoan Drop. There's a spinwheel kick to stagger the champ and Rusev throws him through the ropes to the floor. That sets up the Apron Boot and a spear to get rid of Rusev quick.

It's....AJ STYLES in at #3 and the fans lose their minds at the reveal. Roman looks as stunned as anyone as the announcers acknowledge the internet rumors, which to be fair were on WWE.com. An early Styles Clash attempt doesn't work so AJ Pele Kicks him, only to have another Clash countered into the Samoan Drop. Tyler Breeze is in at #4 with kicks to both guys as the fans chant for AJ. Breeze can't get Reigns out so AJ picks him up, only to have Roman punch AJ in the ribs, sending Breeze out to the floor.

Curtis Axel is in at #5 and actually gets in the ring. Axel actually gets the best of it to start but the Outcasts' interference doesn't work, allowing AJ to clothesline Axel to the floor. Chris Jericho is in at #6 and goes after Reigns before elbowing AJ down. Reigns is sent shoulder

first into the post, leaving AJ to try another Clash on Jericho. That's countered into a Walls of Jericho attempt but Reigns makes the save. Kane is in at #7 and Cole actually calls him arguably the greatest Rumble performer of all time. You know, minus the whole WINNING THE MATCH thing.

Kane kicks AJ in the face before going after the other two as things settle down. Goldust is in at #8 and Kane is the only person on his feet. Everyone gets into the same corner as the fans are still chanting for AJ. Ryback is in at #9 and WOW the fans are not happy. Kane and Jericho form an unlikely team (time heals all hot coffee wounds) to put Ryback on the apron but not to the floor. Kofi Kingston is in at #10 and goes after Jericho. AJ hits the springboard forearm on Jericho but gets dropped to the mat for his efforts.

Titus O'Neil is in at #11 and does the usual cleaning house spot, including eliminating Goldust. We've got Reigns, Styles, Ryback, Jericho, O'Neil, Kane and Kingston in at the moment and it's R-Truth in at #12. That means it's time for a ladder but there's no briefcase to grab. Kane gets rid of him in a few seconds and throws Kofi out as well, only to have him land on Big E.'s shoulders for the save of the year. Kofi stops to have a Coke and it's Luke Harper in at #13.

Cue the League of Nations and Vince to pulls Reigns to the floor for a beating, which is likely the way to keep him out of the match until much later. The camera ignores everything going on in the ring as the beating goes on, continuing a long stretch of bad camera work tonight. Stardust is in at #14 as Rusev splashes Reigns through the French announce table. We've been away from the ring for the better part of two minutes at this point.

The camera FINALLY goes back to the ring as the League walks off with a monitor for some reason. Kofi was eliminated off camera and it's Big Show in at #15, giving us Show, Reigns (down on the floor), Styles, Jericho, Harper, Stardust, O'Neil, Ryback and Kane. Titus and Ryback are dumped by Big Show as a stretcher comes out for Reigns. Neville is in at #16 and Reigns gets off the stretcher but goes to the back anyway. We finally see that it was Jericho who eliminated Kofi earlier in the match.

Braun Strowman is in at #17 and runs people over before breaking Kane's chokeslam attempt. Strowman dumps Kane with ease and it's time for the showdown with Big Show. Another chokeslam attempt is broken up and Strowman chokes him out for another easy elimination. So the old giants are already out and we're not even to #20 yet. That's quite the surprise. Kevin Owens is in at #18, limping to the ring to sell the injuries from earlier.

We've got Jericho, Strowman, Harper, Stardust, Styles, Owens and Neville in the ring at the moment with Reigns in the back. Kevin goes right for AJ for the slugout but Neville breaks it up. The Clash is broken up again as Owens superkicks Styles and throws him out for a bit of a surprise. Dean Ambrose is in at #19 and goes right for Owens as you would expect. The fans start cheering for AJ as he leaves and we recap the League beating Reigns down earlier. Sami Zayn is in at #20 for a big surprise and goes right for Owens, tossing him in pretty short order.

Erick Rowan is in at #21 to give us three Wyatts with Bray still to come. The Wyatts get together to dump Stardust and Neville before Strowman starts choking Jericho. Mark Henry is in at #22 and Strowman slams him with ease. The three Wyatts dump Mark about ten seconds after he got in and get rid of Sami as well. Strowman chokes Jericho some more and it's Lesnar in at #23. Brock goes right for Jericho and Strowman before suplexing anyone he can find.

We get Brock vs. Braun and a BIG forearm puts Strowman on his back. Lesnar clotheslines Rowan out and German suplexes Harper. Strowman elbows out of one but misses a charge into the post. Another clothesline drops Strowman and Brock is looking winded. Jack Swagger is in at #24 and charges right into an F5 for an elimination in fifteen seconds. We've got Lesnar, Strowman, Harper Ambrose and Jericho in the ring.

Miz is in at #25 and goes to commentary where he promises to turn Suplex City into Mizney World. Lesnar gets rid of Harper and it's Alberto Del Rio in at #26. Brock throws him down with ease before clotheslining Braun a few times for the elimination. Del Rio, Jericho and Ambrose gang up on Lesnar and it's Bray Wyatt (Cole makes it sound like a random Uso) in at #27. The rest of the Wyatts come back for the gang attack but Brock

shrugs them off like the nothings they are.

It's time for Bray vs. Brock and Wyatt is quickly suplexed. Harper saves Bray from the F5 though and we get a big gang beatdown. Sister Abigail allows the rest of the Family to dump Lesnar and set up a Wrestlemania match. Dolph Ziggler is in at #28 and starts cleaning house with his usual stuff. Miz finally gets in the ring and plants Dolph with the Skull Crushing Finale. It's not enough for an elimination though as Jericho goes after Miz until Sheamus is in at #29. Reigns decks him in the aisle and gets back in to eliminate Miz and Del Rio.

Bray is up to go after Roman as Sheamus hasn't gotten in the ring yet. The Superman Punch decks Wyatt and the booing is all over the place again. Reigns is the only man standing and indeed it's HHH in at #30 to give us HHH, Reigns, Sheamus (on the floor) Jericho, Wyatt, Ambrose and Ziggler as the final group.

HHH and Reigns have their big staredown but Ziggler has to be Pedigreed. Bray gets speared and it's back to the staredown with all seven still in. They slug it out with Reigns countering the Pedigree. Sheamus gets in and throws Reigns to the ropes before it's time for the parade of finishers. Bray gets a Codebreaker and Lionsault but Jericho can't put Reigns out. HHH sidesteps a charging Dolph for an elimination and we're down to six.

Bray and HHH have a bizarre staredown but HHH points to Reigns. That's not cool with Bray who punches the boss in the jaw, only to have Sister Abigail broken up with a Brogue Kick. HHH and Sheamus put Bray out but are both sent to the apron by Reigns. Ambrose takes Sheamus down with a neckbreaker but Jericho drops Dean with a high cross body. A Codebreaker drops HHH but Dean throws Chris out to give us Ambrose, HHH, Reigns and Sheamus (he's always there near the end) for the final four.

Sheamus misses a Brogue Kick and gets Superman Punched to the floor, only to have HHH throw Reigns out for a big ovation. We're down to Ambrose vs. HHH which is a really surprising final pairing. The fans are all behind Ambrose (duh) and there's an early Rebound Lariat (which Cole actually calls, I kid you not, the Wacky Line). The Pedigree is broken up and Dean sends him to the apron but charges into a knee. HHH backdrops him out and

wins the title at 1:02:45.

Rating: A-. That was exhausting. You kind of knew HHH was going to win but it's still the right call as it sets up Reigns vs. HHH at some point, hopefully next month instead of in Dallas. I really liked the fact that they didn't have HHH vs. Reigns as the final two as it would have been way too easy. Ambrose wasn't going to win of course but it was nice to have the false hope instead of just going with the obvious.

The rest of the match was awesome though I have no idea what they're thinking if they want to do Brock vs. Braun. It was almost painful watching them same spots over and over as Brock can only clothesline and knee him in the back so many times. Lesnar was kind of all over the place in this as he really doesn't fit the wrecking machine mold like you would expect him to.

It was a good enough night for surprises with AJ (I had forgotten he was in by the end though that's not a criticism) and Sami, who hopefully is main roster bound soon, as the main names. It's probably best that they didn't do the legends and such in a match for the title so well done all around. Really good Rumble and easily the best in years, at least partially because of the options near the end. I know I say that a lot but they're so important in a match like this.

A very quick celebration takes us out as it's 11pm.

Overall Rating: A. Oh yeah this was great. The Rumble is a tricky show as it's all about the one big match and it more than delivered this year. On top of that though we had four good to really good matches for a strong undercard. I had a great time with this show, though I'm really curious to see what they have planned for Wrestlemania at this point. HHH vs. Reigns really isn't a strong enough headliner though I'm not sure what else they have with so many injuries. Still though, great stuff here and an awesome show.

Results

Dean Ambrose b. Kevin Owens – Ambrose shoved Owens through two tables

New Day b. Usos – Big Ending to Jey

Kalisto b. Alberto Del Rio – Salida Del Sol

Charlotte b. Becky Lynch – Spear

HHH won the Royal Rumble last eliminating Dean Ambrose

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of the Complete Monday Nitro Reviews Volume IV at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B01AXP08DK>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2014: Oh NO! NO! NO!

Royal Rumble 2014

Date: January 26, 2014

Location: Consol Energy Center, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

The big story here is the rise of Daniel Bryan, who has gone from solid midcard guy to the people's choice to win the Rumble. However, Batista has returned and is basically the guaranteed winner of the Rumble, no matter what the fans want to see. I can't imagine this ends well. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Tag Team Titles: Goldust/Cody Rhodes vs. New Age Outlaws

The Outlaws reunited as a nostalgia act and pinned the champs to earn this shot. Dogg and Cody get things going with Dogg hammering away, only to miss his Shake Rattle and Roll punch. Cody misses the Disaster Kick but sends both Outlaws to the floor. The champs hit dives on the Outlaws as we take a break. Back with Goldust in trouble as Dogg puts on a chinlock.

The Outlaws double team Goldust for a bit until he hits a jumping sunset flip for two on Dogg. Gunn charges into a powerslam and there's the hot tag to Cody. A missile dropkick drops both Outlaws and Cross Rhodes plants Dogg for two with Billy making the save. Gunn makes a blind tag and hits a Fameasser on Cody for the big upset win.

Rating: C. This was fine for an opener and the fans were into the nostalgia. The Outlaws were only transitional champions anyway as the Usos would get the belts before Wrestlemania. Cody and Goldust had them back before the year was over too so no one was really hurt by this.

The opening video talks about working to achieve your dreams. Sometimes there's a very thin line between almost getting there and getting everything you want. We also focus on Orton vs. Cena because that's the real main event here. The Rumble itself gets a quick mention too.

Daniel Bryan vs. Bray Wyatt

Daniel joined the Wyatt Family on the last Raw of the year but then rejected them a few weeks later, leading to one of the loudest YES chants you'll ever hear. Bryan punches out of the corner to start but Bray drives knees into his ribs and blasts him with an elbow. That's fine with Bryan as he kicks the knee out but has to go after Bray's followers Luke Harper and Erick Rowan. A suicide dive drops Harper but the referee ejects both monsters.

Bray huddles with his Family on the floor, allowing Daniel to take him down with a plancha. Back in and a high cross body gets two on Wyatt but he chops Daniel off the middle rope and out to the floor. Bray charges at Daniel but drives the bad knee into the steps to put him back down again. Back in and Daniel starts kicking at the leg before snapping off a dragon screw leg whip. A modified curb stomp gets two for Bryan but Bray drives

him back into the corner.

They slug it out to the apron with Wyatt snapping Daniel's shoulder down in a big crash. Back in and Bray hits his release suplex slam and we hit the chinlock. Bray puts Daniel's head against the post and drives in forearms to follow up on Bryan's recent concussion. Back in again and a kick to the face gives Bray a few near falls. A big release Rock Bottom plants him again and Bray does his Spider Walk out of the corner. Bryan finally avoids an elbow drop and hits a running clothesline.

Some kicks stagger Bray and a drop toehold sends him into the middle buckle. Daniel kicks away in the corner and nails a top rope hurricanrana for two. Another running clothesline is countered by a running elbow to the chest as Bray takes over again. Bryan low bridges him to the floor and hits a running tornado DDT off the apron. A running dropkick sends Bray into the barricade and a missile dropkick puts Wyatt down in the ring.

The YES Kicks get two but Bray turns him inside out with a clothesline for two. Sister Abigail is countered but Bray bites his way out of the YES Lock. Daniel scores with more kicks and hits a top rope splash but Bray ducks to the floor to avoid the running knee. The Flying Goat is blocked though and Bray hits Sister Abigail into the barricade to knock Bryan silly. Back in and another Sister Abigail is good for the pin.

Rating: A. This was considered a match of the year contender and it's easy to see why. These two beat the tar out of each other with each move getting harder and harder than the previous. Bryan lost here but came out looking like a star. Bray on the other hand looks like a killer and that's exactly what he's supposed to be.

Paul Heyman says Brock Lesnar is going to challenge the winner of Orton vs. Cena for the World Title. However, first he has to make an example out of Big Show.

Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger is here.

The expert panel of Jim Duggan, Shawn Michaels and Ric Flair aren't sure who to pick between Lesnar and Big Show.

Big Show vs. Brock Lesnar

These two have had a feud for years and this time Big Show has been getting the better of it through pure power. Lesnar takes Show down before the bell and pounds on him with fists and then a chair. As Big Show is down, Lawler says Big Show gave Lesnar his first loss at the 2002 Royal Rumble, which would be three months before Lesnar debuted. We get the opening bell with Lesnar getting another chair but Show nails him with the KO Punch. Lesnar is rocked and Show takes him outside for a whip into the barricade. Back in and Big Show loads up another KO but Lesnar ducks and throws him up for the F5 for the easy pin.

Lesnar beats on him with the chair even more after the match. He's broken two chairs over Show's back.

Shield says they have 27 enemies tonight and it'll be the three of them left standing. Only one of them can stand tall at the end but Reigns thinks he has the winning number. He won't say what it is though. Dean offers to tell him his if Reigns tells his. Dean: "What if I have two numbers? I have ALL the numbers!" They agree to believe in the Shield.

Orton says he's going to beat Cena and put him to the back of the line. Renee Young asks about Batista, Brock Lesnar and Bray Wyatt wanting title shots but Orton laughs it off and calls Wyatt a deranged hillbilly Duck Dynasty reject.

We recap Orton vs. Cena. This is more about their short term history, focusing on the titles being unified back in December. Orton seems to be cracking under the pressure of being champion and even attacked Cena's father at Raw recently.

WWE World Title: Randy Orton vs. John Cena

No countout and no DQ with Orton defending.. The fans loudly chant for Daniel Bryan before and after the bell. They hit the mat and the fans are already bored less than twenty seconds in. Cena fights up and gets two off a bulldog but charges into an elbow in the corner. Now a Randy Savage chant starts up and Orton stops for a second before kicking Cena even more.

Off to a chinlock as the fans chant for Y2J. After fighting out, Cena catches on and tries a Boston crab. Orton kicks him to the floor during a brief Undertaker chant and now it's just the standard boring chant. A clothesline puts Orton back outside but he sends Cena into the steps. Back in and a DDT gets two for Orton as the fans just say both guys suck. Cena comes back with shoulder blocks and the ProtoBomb, only to take too long jawing and walk into a powerslam for two.

A half nelson slam into a neckbreaker gets two for Cena but he gets caught on top. He headbutts his way out though and hits the top rope Fameasser for two. Orton counters the AA attempt into his backbreaker for two as the fans have calmed down a bit. The Elevated DDT off the apron to the floor gets two more on John. Orton's RKO is countered into the STF but Randy is too close to the ropes. He grabs the ropes to block an AA as well but the referee gets bumped.

There's the STF again and Orton taps but there's no referee. Orton uses the opportunity to nail Cena with a title belt for two. He stands around too long again though and takes an AA for two more. The RKO gets the same and now the fans want Divas. Orton misses the Punt but pulls Cena down into an STF. John counters that into a Crossface but Orton rolls into a cover for two.

Back up and Orton hits Cena with an AA, followed by Cena grabbing an RKO for another near fall. With nothing left to do, Cena loads up a middle rope AA but has to settle for a tornado DDT. The STF goes on in the middle of the ring...we've got Wyatts. The lights go out and come back on to reveal all three on the apron. Cena goes after them but walks into an RKO to keep the title on Orton.

Rating: B. This matchup has suffered from brand damage. We've seen it so many times over the years that even if the match is good, like it was here, people just do not want to see it. The guys got the crowd to calm down a bit about halfway through the match, but there's just nothing left to see from these two. They're both hard workers and try every time they're out there but the interest is just gone.

The fans chant for Bryan as the Wyatts destroy Cena even more.

Tribute video to the recently passed away Mae Young.

The New Age Outlaws celebrate but tell Renee that she isn't invited to the party.

We get some classic Rumble promos.

Miz will win because he'll do whatever it takes to headline Wrestlemania again.

The Usos are cool with having to fight each other.

Intercontinental Champion Big E. says headlining Wrestlemania is where it's at.

Fandango thinks he's the only one worthy to headline the big dance.

Batista just says exactly.

Damien Sandow says it's insane to try the same thing and expect different results. He won't make the same mistake again.

Ryback says there are 29 superstars and one Human Wrecking Ball.

Mysterio will shock the world again.

The expert panel makes their picks. Duggan likes Ziggler, Shawn goes with Shield or Punk and Flair takes Batista.

Royal Rumble

90 second intervals with Punk at #1 (as ordered by Kane) and Seth Rollins at #2. Punk takes him into the corner to start for some shoulders to the ribs. Some kicks stagger Rollins but he comes back with a big kick of his own. A clothesline drops Rollins again but he pops back up with an enziguri. Both guys are down as Damien Sandow is in at #3. The fans loudly chant for Punk as he DDTs Sandow and drops Rollins with a neckbreaker at the same time.

The heels stomp Punk down until Cody Rhodes is in at #4. Cross Rhodes plants Sandow but Rollins stops an elimination attempt. Punk dumps Damien

a few seconds later though and it's time for Rollins to get double teamed. Kane comes in at #5 and cleans Punk's clock. He loads up the chokeslam but Punk kicks him in the head for a surprise elimination. The debuting Alexander Rusev is in at #6.

Rusev kicks Rollins and Rhodes in the face but can't eliminate either guy. Instead he just beats everyone up until Jack Swagger is in at #7. It's Swagger vs. Rusev now but everyone opts to gang up on Rusev instead. Cody and Swagger break off and Kofi Kingston is in at #8. Everyone fights by the ropes until Jimmy Uso is in at #9. The announcers are noticing how fast the clock is going by.

Jimmy goes after Kofi in the corner as Rusev works on Swagger. Punk puts Rusev in a sleeper and Goldust is in at #10, giving us a group of Punk, Rollins, Goldust, Cody, Jimmy, Swagger, Kingston and Rusev. Goldust hammers away until Rusev nails him in the jaw. A group of people gang up on Rusev and dump him out, which isn't quite a great debut for him. Kofi gets thrown out as well but Rusev catches him in mid air. He drops Kofi on the barricade and it's time for the great return. Kingston stands up, uses the barricade as a balance beam and jumps back to the apron in a pretty cool save.

US Champion Dean Ambrose is in at #11 and goes right after Punk. Things slow down again and Dolph Ziggler is in at #12. The fans are entirely behind Dolph as the ring is getting too full. Punk has to hang onto the apron as R-Truth comes in at #13, only to be dumped in about thirty seconds by Ambrose. Rollins knocks out Jimmy and Kofi steals Swagger's boot while literally hanging on by his feet. Jack comes over to him but gets nailed by the boot as Kofi gets back in.

Kevin Nash makes a required return at #14. He eliminates Swagger with ease and goes after Ambrose and Rollins. Punk has Ziggler dangling but Dolph gets his feet back in. Roman Reigns completes the Shield at #15, giving us Punk, Rollins, Rhodes, Kingston, Goldust, Ambrose, Ziggler, Nash and Reigns. Roman cleans house with punches and spears before launching Kofi out.

Ziggler puts Roman down with a DDT but eats a spear to cut him in half.

Reigns throws Ziggler out with ease and the fans suddenly hate him. Nash gets the same treatment as Reigns now has three eliminations in less than two minutes. Great Khali is in at #16 and goes after the Shield but gets tossed by Reigns. Goldust eliminates Cody to make up for the last two years but Reigns gets rid of Goldust a second later. That leaves the Shield alone with Punk but Sheamus returns after being out six months with an injury at #17.

Sheamus cleans house and gives Dean the ten forearms followed by an Irish Curse to Rollins. Reigns eats a Brogue Kick as Miz is in at #18. Punk is just laying in the corner and making almost no effort to get back up. Miz hammers away on Reigns in the corner and Fandango is in at #19. The entire crowd starts doing his dance but Miz sends him to the apron in just a few seconds. Fandango gets back in though as Shield slowly takes over again. Reigns motions to Punk in the corner but doesn't go after him. Punk hasn't moved from there in at least five minutes now.

El Torito is in at #20, giving us Punk, Rollins, Ambrose, Reigns, Sheamus, Miz, Fandango and Torito. Of course the bull cleans house until Punk stands up. Punk grabs him by the head but takes a headscissors, only to have Fandango run Torito over. The referee checks on Punk as Torito dropkicks Fandango out. Reigns catches Torito with ease and dumps him out for his sixth elimination. Punk gets back up as Cesaro is in at #21. He immediately starts swinging Miz but Shield breaks up a Swing attempt on Punk. Instead Rollins gets swung a ridiculous THIRTY TIMES. Luke Harper is in at #22 as Reigns spears Cesaro down.

Rollins and Cesaro slug it out until Jey Uso is in at #23. The brawling slows down a bit now and JBL is in at #24. Cole: "The JBL character has never entered the Royal Rumble." Good grief. JBL wears his full suit into the ring but asks Cole to go get his jacket, allowing Reigns to dump him out. Fans: "YOU STILL GOT IT!" Erick Rowan is in at #25 as JBL tries to talk about ANYTHING but being in the Rumble. Rowan kicks Miz out to clear things up a bit but everything slows back down again.

Harper tosses Jey Uso but the Wyatts turn around to see the Shield. Ryback is in at #26 and goes right for Cesaro as the fans chant Goldberg. Alberto Del Rio gets lucky #27 and things slow down yet again. Batista is

in at #28 and the fans just rip him apart. He quickly dumps Rowan and has a staredown with Ryback before dumping him as well. Del Rio, the man who has been going after Batista since he returned, superkicks him down but gets lifted into the air and dumped with ease.

Intercontinental Champion Big E. is in at #29 to almost no reaction but the fans like him for suplexing Batista. The fans are chanting for Bryan and get even louder as the countdown clock comes on. The clock runs out...and it's Rey Mysterio. To say the fans aren't pleased with this is the understatement of the year. We're going to pause for a second here and look at this.

First of all, Rey Mysterio is a fine choice for #30 in the Royal Rumble. He's a multiple time World Champion, he's held nearly every title in WWE history, he's going to be in the Hall of Fame one day, he's the most successful cruiserweight of all time, he's won the Royal Rumble before and he's one of the most popular wrestlers ever. However, he's not the right choice for this spot.

There are two schools of thought here. The first and more prominent is that WWE just did not understand the fans and thought they would accept Batista as the big star making his return and embrace him with open arms. Then they heard the reaction and changed course to make Wrestlemania all about Daniel Bryan. The other school of thought is Bryan not being in the Rumble was planned from the beginning, they knew where they were going at Wrestlemania the entire time and the stories about Orton vs. Batista headlining the show were false rumors. I'm in the middle on that but I lean more towards the second.

Now Bryan didn't have to win the Rumble here. You could have had a bunch of different ways to get rid of him, even down to having Kane run out and eliminate him if need be. However, he should have been in the main event. It makes sense that he at least has a chance to be in there, even if it's just to get screwed over again.

Anyway, we have a final grouping of Punk, Rollins, Ambrose, Reigns, Sheamus, Cesaro, Harper, Batista, Langston and Mysterio. Rey hurricanranas Punk to the apron as the fans are booing the heck out of

the match. Sheamus clotheslines Langston out to end his worthless Rumble. Cesaro hammers on everyone in sight and Rey hits the 619 on Rollins just to make everyone even madder. Rollins enziguris Rey out for a nice pop and we're down to eight.

Dean and Seth put Harper on the apron but Reigns Superman Punches him out to give him eight eliminations. Ambrose tries to put out his Shield mates but Cesaro jumps he and Rollins. That's fine with Reigns who dumps Cesaro, Rollins and Ambrose all at once to tie Kane's record for eliminations in a single Rumble.

We're down to four now and everyone hits a finisher. Reigns takes the GTS but Kane sneaks in to eliminate Punk. That would be Punk's last WWE match to date. Kane goes off on Punk outside and chokeslams him through the announcers' table. We're down to Sheamus, Batista and Reigns but all three are down. Another Daniel Bryan chant starts up as Batista takes over, turning it into a NO chant.

Sheamus cleans house and points at the sign before loading up a Brogue Kick. He misses Batista though and gets backdropped to the apron. Reigns elbows Sheamus out to set a new Rumble record for eliminations with twelve. That leaves Reigns vs. Batista and all of a sudden everyone is a Reigns fan. Reigns wins a slugout and clotheslines Batista down as the people chant for Roman. Batista comes back with his own horrible spear, only to have Reigns show him how it's done...and then get thrown out a few seconds later to send Batista to Wrestlemania.

Rating: D. This just wasn't a very good Rumble though its moments. Batista came in at the wrong time and it killed any kind of comeback he could have had. The fans did not want to see what the company was offering them at this point and they let them know about it. In their defense though, this Rumble was kind of awful. The comedy and returns felt forced, Rusev's debut went nowhere and they might as well have given it to Batista and put on an hour of Mighty Mouse cartoons to save everyone's time. It's not a good match but the crowd reaction is certainly interesting.

Batista is booted out of the building as we see a highlight package ends

the show.

Overall Rating: D+. The Rumble really hurts this show as it drags down two good matches and an entertaining Lesnar squash. The problem is that's the lasting memory of this show: the fans booing the heck out of Batista as WWE seemed to think he was exactly what WWE wanted. The show isn't horrible but it leaves a really bad taste in your mouth.

Ratings Comparison

New Age Outlaws vs. Goldust/Cody Rhodes

Original: C

Redo: C

Daniel Bryan vs. Bray Wyatt

Original:A

Redo: A

Brock Lesnar vs. Big Show

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

John Cena vs. Randy Orton

Original:B

Redo: B

Royal Rumble

Original:B

Redo: D

Overall Rating

Original:A

Redo: D+

Hokey smoke that's quite the drop.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2014/01/26/royal-rumble-2014-the-night-the-crowd-died/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of the Complete Monday Nitro Reviews Volume IV at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B01AXP08DK>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2013: But Of Course

Royal Rumble 2013

Date: January 27, 2013

Location: US Airways Center, Phoenix, Arizona

Attendance: 13,000

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

This show was only a year ago and I can barely remember anything about it. Aside from the Rumble the big matches are the Rock challenging CM Punk for the WWE Title in the most obvious ending ever and Alberto Del

Rio defending his newly won World Heavyweight Championship against Big Show in a last man standing match. Other than that we've only got HELL NO vs. the Rhodes Scholars to complete the card. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: US Title: The Miz vs. Antonio Cesaro

Cesaro is defending. This is just after Flair passed the Figure Four to Miz, starting the worst period of his career. Miz grabs a headlock to start and gets two off an elbow to the jaw. The headlock takes Cesaro down to the mat but he fights up and grabs one of his own. Back up and Miz tries a leapfrog but gets caught in midair with a tikt-a-whirl backbreaker for two. The champion takes over and cranks on both of Miz's arms before getting two off a Michinoku Driver.

A hard European uppercut sets up the gutwrench suplex for two and it's back to the double arm. Back up again and Miz slips out of a slam and hooks the Reality Check for two. There's the running clothesline in the corner and Miz goes up but hurts his knee on the top rope ax handle. Cesaro gets caught with his feet on the ropes, allowing Miz to get two off a rollup. Antonio misses a running knee in the corner but is still able to roll away from the Figure Four. Cesar takes him to the floor and rams Miz into the metal underneath the ring. Miz is out cold so Cesaro Neutralizes him for the pin to retain.

Rating: D+. Miz just doesn't work in a lot of these matches and the Figure Four doesn't work in the slightest. Thankfully he wouldn't be featured very prominently for awhile as there was just nothing to him for the most part. Cesaro still needs to get a push as he's more talented and marketable than half the roster but instead we get people like Miz.

The opening video is about time passing and how no one has enough. This ties into Punk's time as champion with Rock saying the reign ends tonight.

Smackdown World Title: Big Show vs. Alberto Del Rio

Last man standing match, which is a rematch with the same stipulations from when Alberto won the title a few weeks ago. Del Rio turned the announce table on top of Big Show so Big Show turned it on top of him a

few weeks later. Alberto is shown in the back and he runs into Bret Hart for no apparent reason whatsoever. Bret says Alberto reminds him of a Mexican version of himself. Alberto calls Bret a Canadian Del Rio and Ricardo gushes, earning him Bret's sunglasses. What a bizarre cameo.

Some hard chops have Del Rio in early trouble and a slam gets a five count. Alberto chops away but jumps off the middle rope right into a chop to change control right back. The champion dropkicks the giant's knee out but the low superkick actually knocks Big Show up from his knees to his feet. A hurricanrana and a seated senton put Big Show down and Alberto gets a breather. It's amazing how much more interesting Del Rio is by doing this lucha stuff instead of his arm work. The arm stuff is good but this is such a nice change of pace.

Big Show blocks the armbreaker with one arm and slams Del Rio down, sending him outside. Del Rio gets back in as Big Show gets a chair but the champion dropkicks him in the ribs to knock it out of his hands. A series of chair shots (crowd: "SI! SI! SI!") has Big Show down but Alberto dives into a chokeslam for an eight count. We head outside again with Del Rio getting chopped to the floor with ease. This is a very slow paced match so far.

A pair of low blows puts Big Show down in the aisle but he's up at nine. Show hits something resembling a DDT on the floor before sending Del Rio into the set. He rips a piece of the set, resembling a light tube, and blasts Del Rio over the back. Since this is WWE there's a table readily available and Big Show takes the champion on top of the set for a chokeslam through the table. The bump looked awesome but he's again on his feet at nine.

The beating takes Del Rio back to the ring and Show loads up the WMD. Alberto sees it coming and rolls outside, only to have Big Show throw Ricardo around for fun. Big Show misses a charge through the barricade (clearly heavily padded) for five but a long series of chair shots has him down again. Del Rio crushes the arm between the steps and a chair, but Alberto follows up with a fire extinguisher blast to the face for no apparent reason. Back in and the armbreaker goes on, but Ricardo ups the ante by duct taping Big Show's legs to the ropes. The giant can't get up

and Alberto retains the title.

Rating: C-. This wasn't the worst match in the world but it was very slowly paced and the ending made Del Rio look more clever than tough. It also doesn't help that the match was the same gimmick they did less than a month ago. Face Alberto was a nice guy but they cut the cord just six months after this. Not bad, but Del Rio winning the title here would have been much better.

Send Slim Jims to the military!

Ziggler isn't worried about being in the Rumble and AJ threatens Matt Striker with Big E. Langston for implying Ziggler can't win. Langston does one of the most mind blowing imitations of an annoying reporter while asking Ziggler for his thoughts on the main event. Dolph has little of note to say but no one was hearing him after Big E.'s bit anyway.

Cesaro says he'll continue the streak of non-Americans winning the Rumble.

The Prime Time Players.....WE'RE GETTING RUMBLE PROMOS!!!! Anyway they say anyone that thinks they'll eliminate either of them is getting a penalty flag.

Orton says he's perfect for the Rumble because it's every man for himself.

Cena is ready for the Rumble because it means he can be champion again.

Intercontinental Champion Wade Barrett says he'll restore credibility to the Rumble.

Sheamus says he won the Rumble last year and he'll do it again tonight.

Ryback isn't any catchphrase and he doesn't eat Fruity Pebbles, but he'll see food every 90 seconds. Feed him more.

We recap Miz vs. Cesaro on the pre-show.

Tag Titles: HELL NO vs. Rhodes Scholars

The Scholars are challenging. Cody kicks Bryan in the ribs as Cole references Queen lyrics. Bryan spins out of a wristlock and the fans chant for Cody's mustache. Cody's leapfrog is countered into a surfboard and it's off to Kane for a low dropkick and a two count. Rhodes scores with a dropkick of his own and drives Kane into the corner for the tag off to Sandow. Kane easily powers Sandow into the corner because, you know, he's Damien Sandow and it's off to Bryan for the YES Kicks.

JBL rants about Cole and Lawler hugging as Kane kicks Sandow in the face, knocking him out to the floor. The FLYING GOAT takes out the challengers but Cody low bridges Bryan to the floor to take over. Back in and a half crab has Daniel in trouble but he reverses into a small package to escape. Damien comes in again and drops an elbow for two before dropping the Wind-Up Elbow.

After some knees to the back it's Cody in again but he charges into a boot in the corner. Sandow breaks up a hot tag attempt and Cody puts Bryan in an over the shoulder backbreaker. Daniel slides down to escape and makes the tag to Kane. Sandow is tossed around like a rag doll but a Cody distraction prevents the top rope clothesline. Kane grabs both guys by the throat and Bryan tags himself in. The Scholars double suplex Kane but Bryan shoves Cody into a chokeslam and Daniel YES Locks Sandow to retain.

Rating: C. Nothing you wouldn't see on Raw around this time which means it was fine. The Scholars were a nice idea for a team but it was clear that they had no chance at this point given how low their individual stocks were. Kane and Bryan gelled perfectly well as a team and Bryan would get far bigger very soon.

Rumble By The Numbers which I've typed many times already.

HELL NO celebrates in the back when Vickie Guerrero comes up and gives them their Rumble numbers. Daniel shows Kane his but Kane won't show Bryan.

We look at the Royal Rumble Fan Fest which is another name for Axxess. This included a tournament of NXT wrestlers for a spot in the Rumble, won by Bo Dallas.

Royal Rumble

Ziggler is #1 which he picked (the other option was #2) after winning a Beat the Clock Challenge on Raw. Dolph says he'll win and doesn't care who he faces first, bringing out a returning Chris Jericho at #2. This was a complete shock and the roof is blown off the building. Also remember that Ziggler beat Jericho to send him out of the company to give us some history. The clock is at 90 seconds between entrants this year.

Jericho is quickly sent to the apron but comes back with a top rope ax handle. Now it's Dolph on the apron as the fans tell Jericho he still has it. When did Jericho ever come close to losing it? A superplex brings Ziggler back into the ring and Cody Rhodes is in at #3. Jericho hammers away on him but Ziggler gets in a cheap shot as the double teaming begins. Chris knocks Ziggler down and puts Cody in the Walls but Dolph makes the save.

Dolph catapults Jericho throat first into the bottom rope as Kofi Kingston is in at #4. Kofi immediately speeds things up and pounds away on Cody but can't hit Ziggy with Trouble in Paradise. Ziggler is thrown to the apron and all four guys try to eliminate each other at the same time in the same spot. Santino Marella is #5 and he sends all four to the apron before loading up the Cobra. Everybody is back in and even though Santino takes Kofi down with the sock, it's Cody backdropping Marella out.

Drew McIntyre of 3MB is #6 and gets to fight Kofi as everyone else takes a breather. Back up and it's time to lay on the ropes while trying to eliminate people. Jericho is sent over the ropes but he keeps his feet off the ground and gets back in. Titus O'Neil is in at #7 to add some power, including taking Cody and Kofi down with a double clothesline. Cole finally tells us that the bark is a shout out to his fraternity from Florida. Thank you for explaining that to us after two years.

Jericho throws out McIntyre but can't do the same to Ziggler as Goldust is #8. Cody gets ready for the showdown and the fans are WAY into this. They trade the kneeling uppercuts and Goldie stomps on Cody for a bit. The fans chant for Goldust and it's David Otunga (remember him?) is in at

#9. The announcers ignore the match to talk about the commentators being in the Rumble last year as people start to pair off.

Nothing much happens until Heath Slater is in at #10. That gives us Ziggler, Jericho, Rhodes, Kingston, O'Neil, Goldust, Otunga and Slater at the moment. Slater fires off right hands to Kofi as Jericho calls spots to Ziggler. Dolph gets stuck on the apron again and Sheamus is #11 to clear out some bodies. He destroys everyone with his usual stuff before sending Titus to the apron for the ten forearms. Otunga is thrown onto Titus to get rid of O'Neil before ten forearms and a Brogue Kick get rid of the lawyer. Tensai, still the Japanese lunthead, is #12.

Everybody goes after Tensai to make a big cluster in the corner. That goes nowhere at all so Brodus Clay comes in at #13. We get a Tons of Funk preview before Goldust backdrops Cody to the apron, only to get pulled to the apron as well. Cody gets back in and sends Goldust into the post for the elimination and a lot of booing. Rey Mysterio is #14 to make the crowd happy again. Ziggler and Jericho get quick 619s and the top rope splash crushes Jericho. Things slow down a bit until we reach the halfway point with Darren Young at #15.

A bunch of guys join forces to dump Brodus and Kofi puts out Tensai a few seconds later. Now we get to the part that everybody was waiting on as Kofi is knocked off the apron, only to land on Tensai's back. He jumps onto the announcers' table as he tries to figure this out. Why he doesn't just jump two feet to get onto the steps is beyond me. Bo Dallas is #16 as this is going on. Instead of the steps, Kofi gets JBL's office chair and pogos his way back to the ring. Kingston pulls Darren out of the ring but gets caught with the Disaster Kick for the elimination before he can get back inside.

Godfather gives us the nostalgia pop at #17 and is dropkicked out by Ziggler four seconds later. He seems ok with that and leaves with his women. The whole point was the entrance anyway so I have no issue with that. Wade Barrett is in at #18 as the ring is getting too full. Everything slows down again and John Cena is #19 to clear out some tired people. Everybody gets ready for him so Cena comes a charging. John fights them all off and throws out Slater and Cody but can't dump

Jericho.

Damien Sandow is #20, giving us Ziggler, Jericho, Sheamus, Mystério, Dallas, Barrett, Cena and Sandow. Mystério and Barrett fight to the apron and a big forearm puts Rey out. Sheamus goes right after Wade as Jericho tries to put Cena in the Walls. Daniel Bryan is #21 and fires off kicks to Sandow. Now it's Barrett getting the kicks as everyone else is down. Sheamus and Bryan try to put Jericho out but he slides back in under the ropes.

Antonio Cesaro is in at #22 and gets in a fight with Sheamus as the fans start the dueling Cena chants. Everybody is back up now and Great Khali is #23. It's chops all around until things calm a bit. Kane comes in at #24 to fire things up again (get it?) but the ring is too full. It gets even worse with Zach Ryder coming in at #25 but HELL NO dumps Khali. Bryan dumps Kane but Cesaro dumps Bryan into Kane's arms. Daniel: YES! Kane shouts no and drops Bryan for the elimination in a funny bit.

Randy Orton is #26 and it's powerslams all around. Ziggler and Dallas get a double Elevated DDT and it's an RK0 for Ryder, followed by the elimination. Jinder Mahal gets lucky #27 as Cesaro lifts Cena up, only to be eliminated himself. Ziggler gets launched to the ropes but slides back in as Miz is #28. He gets in a fight with Cesaro in the aisle and limps into the ring to sell the ankle injury from earlier. Sheamus dumps Mahal and Sin Cara is #29.

Cara tries an enziguri on Ziggler which misses by four inches but Ziggler sells it anyway. Bo Dallas pulls Barrett out in an elimination that should have led further than it did. Miz sends Jericho to the apron as Barrett pulls Dallas out from the floor. Ryback is #30 to give us a final grouping of Ryback, Ziggler, Jericho, Sheamus, Cena, Sandow, Orton, Miz and Sin Cara. Damien is out first and Sin Cara quickly follows. Miz tries to power Ryback out and is tossed as well to get us down to six. Jericho is somehow still alive and hits a Lionsault on Cena but the springboard dropkick doesn't eliminate Sheamus.

Ziggler backdrops Jericho to the apron and superkicks him out (missed as well but he's spent at this point) but walks into an RK0. There's one for

Cena as well and Sheamus gets the third. That leaves Ryback to fight Orton but the monster gets taken down with an Elevated DDT. Ryback fights off the RKO and clotheslines Randy out to get us down to four. Ziggler DDTs Cena down but a Brogue Kick puts Dolph on the floor.

It's Sheamus, Ryback and Cena with Ryback getting double suplexed down. Cena and Sheamus make things serious by LOOKING AT THE SIGN. John takes over but Ryback runs him over with a clothesline. Sheamus escapes the Shell Shock, looks at the sign, and hits White Noise on Ryback. The Brogue Kick is countered with a backdrop to eliminate Sheamus and we're down to two.

They LOOK AT THE SIGN and do their signature taunts before Ryback spinebusters Cena down. The Meathook is countered into the STF and Ryback passes out, leaving him as dead weight. Ryback fights out of the corner and Cena's head into the mat. He loads up a powerslam but Cena slips out the back and shoves Ryback out for the win and title shot at Wrestlemania.

Rating: B. It's a good but not great Rumble. That being said, there was almost no other option to win here, even though it set up the rematch that no one wanted to see. There's certainly some good stuff in it and there were no down spots, but you would expect more big moments than we got here.

Coming Home ad for Wrestlemania. That still should have been Wrestlemania XXX.

We recap CM Punk vs. The Rock. It's a basic story: Punk has been champion for 434 days and Rock is getting a title shot because he's the Rock, which was kind of a lame reason, especially when the shot was announced six months ago. That began a countdown that made everything Punk did meaningless, because there was no way it would be anyone but Rock taking the belt from him here. Yeah Punk got in some shots on Rock before the match, but this was as much of a layup as you could get. Also if Shield or anyone interferes, Punk is stripped of the title.

Rock, after waiting for them to chant his name, says he isn't worried about Shield, even though they busted up his lung recently. He goes on a

rant about how many hard things he's been through, but redeems himself a bit by talking about his mom getting cancer but beating it to be here tonight. Punk has said that the people don't count but Rock says every single one of them count to him. He reaches his hand out to everyone that believes in the Rock so he can get their power, if you smell what he's cooking.

Raw World Title: The Rock vs. CM Punk

Punk of course has Heyman with him. He charges right into the brawl and actually pounds Rock down into the corner. A quick Rock Bottom is countered but Punk is sent outside. Rock follows him outside and sends the champion into the barricade before loading up the announce table. Punk comes back with a shot to the ribs and puts the table back together in a great bit. Back in and Rock scores with more right hands to knock Punk to the floor again.

Punk is whipped into the barricade one more time but he gets a boot up to stop a charging Bull. He finishes fixing the announce table instead of following up on Rock before dropping Rock ribs first on the barricade. They head inside again for a body vice from CM followed by a knee to the ribs for two. Off to a freaky looking hold where Punk pins Rock's shoulders down but pulls back on his head to crank on the shoulders and back.

More choking follows and a knee to the back has Rock on the apron, followed by a springboard dropkick to send him outside. Punk tries a top rope ax handle to take Rock down but injures his knee in the process. Rock scores with some kicks to the knee but the champion easily sends him out to the floor to stop the comeback. Back in and Punk misses the springboard clothesline and reinjures the knee, giving Rock his opening.

A DDT gets one on Punk but he fights out of the Rock Bottom. The GTS is countered into a Sharpshooter attempt but Punk counters into the Anaconda Vice in a nice sequence. Rock rolls over into a cradle, forcing Punk to let go of the hold. Back up and tries the Rock Bottom but Punk counters into a rollup for two, only to be countered into a low seated Sharpshooter. Punk is next to the rope so naturally he takes thirty

seconds to get the break.

Rock takes him to the floor and loads up the announce table again. They fight on top but Rock counters a GTS attempt into what was supposed to be a Rock Bottom but was really more like the table collapsing with Rock's arm around Punk's chest. Rock comes up holding his knee and both guys make it back in at an eight count. Punk scores with a high kick but both guys are down.

Back up and Rock wins a slugout before scoring with the spinebuster. He loads up the People's Elbow and there go the lights. Cole can see Shield pulling Rock to the floor and powerbombing him through the table. The lights come back up and Rock is laid out as the referee has no idea what's going on. The announcers try to tell Mike Chioda what happened and Punk feigns innocence.

He throws Rock back in for the pin and celebrates but here's Vince to say Punk is stripped of the title for the interference. Rock says no and to restart the match. The bell rings again and Punk stomps away as JBL threatens to put Cole through a table for playing cheerleader. The Macho Elbow gets two but the GTS is countered into a spinebuster, setting up the People's Elbow to end Punk's reign.

Rating: B. It's another good match but it felt like they were dancing around for twenty three minutes before we got to the obvious ending. The Shield stuff was a decent fake out but it really didn't need to be there. Rock winning was obvious though and that really put a ceiling on how high this was going to get.

Rock celebrates for about three minutes to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. Yeah it's a good show overall, but the major problem is obvious: there was no other possibly ending other than Rock vs. Cena at Wrestlemania 29 and almost everyone knew it. The show is definitely entertaining and actually really good at times, but it was so telegraphed up and down the card that it offers almost no excitement at all, even on the initial viewing. Still though, worth checking out if you have nothing else to do.

Ratings Comparison

Antonio Cesaro vs. The Miz

Original: C-

Redo: D+

Alberto Del Rio vs. Big Show

Original: B

Redo: C-

HELL NO vs. Rhodes Scholars

Original: C

Redo: C

Royal Rumble

Original: C+

Redo: B

The Rock vs. CM Punk

Original: B

Redo: B

Overall Rating

Original: A-

Redo: B

That original overall rating is too high for what I gave everything else. Also I think the original last man standing match rating is closer to the accurate one. It just didn't hold up as well on a second viewing, but it was good.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2013/01/27/royal-rumble-2013-by-the-book-and-still-awesome/>

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>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2012: How To Do The Final Two

Royal Rumble 2012

Date: January 29, 2012

Location: Scottrade Center, St. Louis, Missouri

Attendance: 18,121

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, Booker T

We wrap things up here with last year's show. The Rumble is back to the thirty entrant variety which is probably the best move all around. The odds on favorite is Jericho who returned very recently before this show. Other than that we've got Daniel Bryan defending his newly won world title against Big Show and Henry in a cage, along with Punk defending against Ziggler. Let's get to it.

The opening video is of course about going to Wrestlemania.

Smackdown World Title: Big Show vs. Daniel Bryan vs. Mark Henry

Bryan is champion and beat Show at TLC by cashing in his MITB case in 45 seconds. Show beat Henry at the same show and ran over Bryan's girlfriend AJ on Raw to set all this up. This is one fall to a finish and it's pin/submission/escape. Bryan immediately goes for the corner but Henry pulls him down and Show runs Bryan over for two. Show crushes Henry against the cage wall but has to stop to pull Bryan back inside. Bryan tries to run up again but Show catches him by the ankle and slams him back in.

Show loads up the WMD but hits the cage wall instead. The champion fires off some kicks but gets headbutted right back down. Bryan kicks the knee out even harder and fires off some kicks to Henry to keep the other monster down. He goes for the door but you know this isn't ending that quickly. Henry makes the stop and demands that the referee CLOSE THAT DOOR. Show superkicks Henry down and it's his turn to take over for awhile.

Bryan gets slammed down but Henry is back up again. A few punches put Show down because a dozen chair shots usually can't, but a few punches can. Actually that's a great way to keep Henry looking strong. The fans are cheering for Bryan as Henry and Show collide to put all three guys down. Show gets back up and clotheslines Bryan down a few times before superkicking him in the face. The chokeslam is countered and Bryan hits a tornado DDT on Show for two.

The LeBell (NO!) Lock is put on Show but Henry breaks it up in about a second. The WMD gets two on Henry but Bryan makes the save, which ticks Show off. Bryan SPRINTS up the cage but Show chases after him and grabs Bryan before he can get out. Bryan sits on the top of the cage and pounds away, only to be caught again. The champion is literally hanging from Show's wrist before finally letting go and falling to the floor to retain the title.

Rating: D+. This really wasn't all that great. At the end of the day, it was a lot of the same sequence over and over again with Show and Henry

not having a ton of interaction at all. The ending didn't look great either and I'm not sure why Show would just hold him out over the floor like that. This falls under the category of "...really?" as it's hard to buy Bryan keeping the belt here.

Long video on Cena and all the stuff he does for WWE. The man is insanely committed to that company.

Divas of Doom/Bella Twins vs. Eve Torres/Alicia Fox/Tamina/Kelly Kelly

The Divas of Doom are Beth and Natalya. Natalya and Tamina start things off and they collide a few times. Tamina slaps her in the face before chopping Nattie down for two. Off to Eve for that bouncing moonsault for two. Since that's a pretty lame move, Natalya charges her into the corner and brings in Beth who blocks a rolling splash with knees to Eve's back.

Off to let's say Nikki for some basic stomps to the back and a quickly broken chinlock. Jerry is asked what he likes about the Bellas and he can't even get an answer out. Not hot tag brings in Alicia who is immediately sent into the corner and chinlocked as well. Alicia finally counters by flipping Nikki forward and makes the actual hot tag to Kelly. There's the screaming headscissors and a faceplant for two. Everything breaks down and almost everyone heads to the floor, where Kelly hits a HUGE dive to take everyone out. Back in and Beth SLAPS herself in to hit the Glam Slam on Kelly for the pin.

Rating: D+. This was your usual Divas match: they did their "sexy" spots, they had barely there outfits, Kelly screamed a lot, Beth beat up Kelly to end things. One interesting note from a year later: would they even be able to put together an eight Divas tag now? I'm thinking through the roster and I don't know if I can name eight girls on the main shows right now.

We recap Ryder getting hurt at the hands of Kane. This was during the period where Ryder went from one of the hottest things in the company and US Champion to a rag doll that Kane destroyed over and over and over in the span of a few weeks until his push was completely destroyed. Eve blamed Cena for Ryder having his back broken for some reason.

Ryder is wheeled in and patronized by Johnny Ace (remember him?). Ace has a private room set up for Ryder but Eve comes up to yell at Ace first. Not much here but it's setting up stuff later on tonight.

Kane vs. John Cena

This is when Kane had the welder's mask look. Brawl to start with Kane beating Cena down into the corner as the fans are split on Johnny. A clothesline puts them both on the floor where Kane is sent knees first into the steps. Back in and Cena can't hit the AA on Kane. That makes sense as after all, Kane is probably 175lbs lighter than Show who Cena throws around with near ease most of the time.

Kane kicks Cena down and gets two off an uppercut. A suplex gets the same and it's off to a chinlock. Cena fights up and is sent into the buckle for his efforts followed by Kane's stupid smother hold. John tries to counter into a Crossface but Kane comes out with a side slam. The idea here is that Cena can't get anything going at all. The top rope clothesline takes Cena's head off but Cena pops up and hits his shoulder block.

The Shuffle is countered by a grab of Cena's throat and a big boot gets two. Cena blocks a superplex and hits the Shuffle off the top. That's certainly a new one. The AA is countered by an elbow to the face and Kane kicks Cena out to the floor. Booker talks about how Cena is a good kid. I don't think I ever recall Cena being called a kid since like 2004. Kane pounds on Cena in the aisle and that's a double countout so we can do this match again next month.

Rating: D+. I know that's a common theme tonight but it fits here again. These two didn't work all that well together and the story was even worse. Then again, this was nothing more than giving Cena something to do for a few months until he could get ready for the biggest match of his career. This didn't work for the most part.

The fight continues into the back where Kane finds a chair to lay to lay out Cena. To the shock of no one paying attention, Kane finds the door to Ryder's private room and kicks the door in. Ryder is taken to the ring and tombstoned as Eve screams. Cena comes out to try to save Eve but gets

chokeslammed by Kane who walks away. Ryder does a stretcher job, but somehow it would get even worse for him in the coming weeks.

BE A STAR!

Zack is wheeled out and Cena is booed for it. That's the part of this story that never held up for me: why is this Cena's responsibility? Ryder was the United States Champion. He should be able to defend himself.

We get a video on the Rock just like Cena got earlier. It's shot in the back of Rock's car and is more like a mini documentary. It focuses on how insane Rock's life is and all of the stuff he does around the world.

Drew McIntyre vs. Brodus Clay

This is right after Brodus debuted as the Funkasaurus so he was still a new character at this point. Brodus dances a lot, Drew punches him in the corner, Brodus headbutts him and hits the cross body (called WHAT THE FUNK) for the pin in about a minute.

Buy Slim Jims! For the troops!

We recap Punk vs. Ziggler who is challenging Punk on Ace's behalf. This is during the "Ace is boring" phase where Punk made fun of him no matter what he did, so Ace helped Ziggler get a win over Punk to earn a title shot. Ace is also guest referee tonight just because. He's openly admitted he's going to screw Punk out of the title tonight, so HHH is going to evaluate his job status the next night on Raw, meaning Ace has to play nice.

Raw World Title: CM Punk vs. Dolph Ziggler

Punk is defending and Ace is referee. Johnny Ace is John Laurinitis but that's a hard name to spell. Before the match, Ace says he'll be the outside referee. Ok then. Wait we're still not ready to go as Ace throws Vickie out as well. We finally get going and Ziggler tries a quick Fameasser which is countered into a failed GTS attempt. Punk tells Dolph it was that close. They feel each other out a bit longer until Ziggler starts strutting.

Punk finally gets his hands on Ziggler and puts on an abdominal stretch, complete with a wrapped toe and slicking back his hair ala Ziggler. Dolph heads to the floor and gets taken out by a suicide dive but shoves Punk off the top rope once they get back inside. Ziggler drops about eight elbows in a row and a jumping version gets two. We hit the chinlock with Ziggler cranking on the head way more than necessary.

The champ starts firing off chops and strikes before getting caught in the sleeper. That goes nowhere but neither does Punk's Anaconda Vice attempt. Back to the sleeper but Dolph can't get it on all the way. Instead there's a perfect dropkick for two on Punk but the Fameasser is countered into a helicopter bomb for two. A swinging neckbreaker by the champ puts Dolph into the corner where the knee/bulldog combination actually works.

The GTS is countered into a slingshot but Punk lands on the middle rope. He comes off with a spinning cross body but Ziggler rolls through for a near fall in a cool sequence. The high kick gets two for Punk as does the Macho Elbow, drawing a Randy Savage chant. The GTS is countered again and the referee goes down as per the requirement in a world title mach. Punk hooks the Vice but Ace is checking on the down referee. Then Punk gets a rollup and there's STILL no referee.

Ace sends the referee back in as Punk loads up the GTS, but Ziggler's legs knock Ace to the floor. Ace sees the pin but refuses to count because he thinks Punk did it on purpose. Ziggler counters another GTS attempt into the Fameasser for two before pounding away a bit. The champ comes back with a slingshot and the GTS gets a pin from both referees to retain the title.

Rating: B+. This took awhile to get going as we were all waiting on the Ace stuff. The feud would go on for weeks until Jericho finally showed up to give Punk someone with charisma to feud with. The near falls at the end were a lot better than Ace, but it occurs to me that this was pretty much the same match he had last year. Good stuff though.

Rumble by the Numbers:

30 Superstars

1 winner

31 Hall of Famers in the Rumble

21 main events those Hall of Famers have been in at Wrestlemania

695 entrants who have been eliminated

39 entrants eliminated by Michaels, a record (Kane is second at 35)

13 consecutive Rumbles for Kane

11 eliminations for Kane in 2001

194,107lbs that have been in the Rumble, or over 97 tons, or 430 Big Show

421,883 people who have attended the Rumble

62:12 Rey Mysterio spent in the Rumble in 2006, a record

3 wins for Austin

1 second that Santino lasted in 2009

2 women who have competed in the Rumble

1, the entrant that has produced the same amount of winners as #30 at two each

27, the entrant with more winners than any other at four

55 percent of winners that have won the title at Wrestlemania

Royal Rumble

The Miz is #1 and talks about how he's going back to the main event of Wrestlemania this year. His former apprentice Alex Riley is #2 which isn't really surprising given how RANDOM these draws are. I always liked Riley and he always got a good reaction, which is clearly why he doesn't get on TV more. Riley pounds away to start and runs Miz over with a forearm but walks into a big boot. Maybe it's the old school fan in me but I don't like a 6'0 guy using a big boot. Miz talks trash and low

bridges Riley out with ease.

R-Truth, Miz's former partner, is #3. Truth fires off some kicks and avoids the Finale before hitting a kind of powerslam. Miz gets sent to the apron for the second time but Truth turns his back to watch Cody come out at #4. A quick Disaster Kick puts Truth down (Cole says it hits Miz because those two are so hard to tell apart) and Truth gets double teamed for awhile. He manages to send Cody to the apron but gets caught in the Reality Check as the clock seems to be speeding up.

Justin Gabriel is #5 and things speed WAY up. A big spinwheel kick puts Miz down before Cody goes nuts on Gabriel in the corner. Primo is #6 to keep things low key to start. Actually he speeds things up as well and hits a sweet headscissors out of the corner to take Gabriel down. Truth hits the spinning forearm on Cody, only to be dumped out by Miz a second later. Since he's still crazy, Truth pulls Miz to the floor and lays him out on the outside.

Mick Foley is #7 to fire up the crowd a little bit. He dumps Primo almost immediately before getting beaten on by Cody. Foley looks really old and slow here but to be fair, he is in fact old and slow. In a HILARIOUS bit, Ricardo Rodriguez is #8 but comes out in an old banged up, rusted out rental car. He's even got the Del Rio scarf to hide some of his hideous pale body. We get a HUGE Ricardo chant as Foley and Gabriel have no idea what to do here.

Ricardo takes Cody down and pounds away before proposing an alliance with Foley of all people. They actually do team up and toss Gabriel, allowing Ricardo to do a CM Punk knee slide. We keep the comedy going with Santino at #9 and Ricardo runs from the Cobra. Santino beats on Ricardo and literally rolls him around the ring before pulling his trunks up and tossing Rodriguez.

Now we get my favorite spot of the match as Santino puts on the Cobra and Mick puts on Socko and it's TIME FOR A DUEL!!! Before they can collide though it's Epico at #10 but he falls to the powers of the socks and is out almost immediately. The socks COLLIDE until Miz and Cody pop back in (neither was eliminated) and dump Santino. Miz gets Socko but Cody dumps

Mick. Fun comedy bit here to give us a good first act to the match.

Kofi Kingston is #11 and hits a double springboard clothesline before hitting a double Boom Drop. In at #12 is Jerry Lawler (Cole: "WHAT ARE YOU DOING???") and he causes Miz to hit Cody by mistake. Lawler speeds things up and hits the middle rope punch with the lowered strap, only to be put out by Cody. Ezekiel Jackson is #13 and gets to do the usual power moves on each guy while the others lay around.

Jinder Mahal is #14 and the fans start chanting USA, even though the only two Americans in this match are Rhodes and Miz. Great Khali comes in at #15 and Mahal panics. Everyone gets chops and Mahal is out in just a few seconds. Jackson tries to pound away and is put out almost immediately as well. Hunico is #16 on that stupid bicycle of his and hits a spinning cross body on Miz and his Angle Slam on Cody.

Khali chops Hunico down as the ring is staying relatively empty. Booker T is #17 to surprise Cole. You would think he would have noticed that the man sitting next to him for over two hours wasn't wearing pants but he never was considered that bright. Now we get the spot of the match as Miz shoves Kofi to the floor but Kofi holds himself up by his hands. Miz shoves Kofi into a handstand but Kingston WALKS ON HIS HANDS ACROSS THE FLOOR TO THE STEPS to get back in. FREAKING AWESOME MAN!

Dolph Ziggler is #18 as the ring is starting to get full. Hacksaw Jim Duggan makes his annual return at #19 to pop the crowd huge. He cleans house for a bit and we get a DOUBLE NOGGIN KNOCKER on Miz and Rhodes. Cody avoids a charge in the corner though and dumps Duggan in less than a minute. That's the best idea at the end of the day. Miz and Cody team up to put out Booker and Khali at the same time.

We complete the trio with Michael Cole at #20. At the moment we've got Cole, Miz, Rhodes, Kingston, Hunico and Ziggler in the ring. Kharma returns at #21 in her only WWE match ever. She hits Cole so hard she knocks his headgear off so Cole eliminates himself. Well he gets to the apron where King and Booker eliminate him. Ziggler tells Kharma to get out so she DRILLS him. Kharma dumps Hunico but Ziggler sneaks up and eliminates her (Booker calls this doing the impossible. Not really Book.)

to a ton of heat.

Sheamus is #22 to give us some A level star power. Well maybe B+ level. Things speed up with Sheamus destroying everyone and tossing Kofi out. There are the ten forearms in the ropes to Cody and ten to Miz as well. The Zig Zag is countered and Road Dogg is another surprise return at #23. He gets to clean house for a bit and earns a "you still got it" chant. In far less than 90 seconds, Jey Uso is #24.

Everyone pairs off until Jack Swagger is #25. After a few suplexes everything settles down into its usual brawling phase until Barrett is #26. He throws out Roadie and stomps away on a lot of people. David Otunga gets the lucky spot at #27 and poses a lot before he comes out. Not a lot happens so Orton comes in at #28 to pick things up a bit. Remember we're in his hometown so everyone goes nuts.

Cody breaks up the RK0 on Barrett so Randy hits the Elevated DDT on both Cody and Ziggler at the same time because he can. There's an RK0 to Barrett and he's out. Chris Jericho, complete with a blackout of the arena, makes his return at #29. He's still a face at this point and dumps Otunga to a good reaction. Big Show is #30 which was considered a letdown at the time. Dude, he was world champion a month ago. That's hardly Darren Young coming out.

As Show comes in he pulls Swagger out from the floor, giving us a final grouping of Miz, Rhodes, Ziggler, Sheamus, Orton, Jericho and Big Show. That's a pretty solid grouping. Show dumps Cody and Miz at the same time to get us down to five. Show tosses Ziggler as well to get us down to four. The big man cleans house but walks into an RK0, allowing Orton and Sheamus to pick him up and Randy clotheslines him out. Jericho dumps Orton immediately thereafter and we're down to two.

The fans are entirely behind Jericho here so Sheamus runs him over a few times. Jericho's bulldog is countered but Sheamus can't throw him over the corner. Jericho charges into the Irish Curse but Sheamus can't hit the High Cross. We get a great false finish with Jericho clotheslining Sheamus to the apron and then knocking him down to the point where Sheamus is hanging on by his leg. Sheamus comes back in with the

slingshot shoulder but the Brogue Kick is countered into the Walls.

After the hold is broken Jericho gets knocked to the apron where he BARELY hangs on. They go to the top rope and both fall to the apron, meaning if they hit the floor they're out. Both guys get back in and there's the Codebreaker to Sheamus. Jericho gets Sheamus upside down but can't get him out. A shot to the face ticks Sheamus off and he catches a Codebreaker attempt to put Jericho on the apron. The Brogue Kick sends Sheamus to Wrestlemania.

Rating: A-. This is one of those Rumbles that is great fun as you watch it live but it loses some steam on a second viewing. They spent a bit too much time on nostalgia and funny ideas here but they were still really good ideas. The ending with Sheamus and Jericho ROCKED and I have no idea why they never got to have a long PPV match. This is a really good Rumble but it never reaches that excellent level that some of them get to.

Sheamus celebrates a lot to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. The Rumble is a unique show as it has a way to save itself from a bad first half. That's what happened here as the last two matches were certainly good enough to save it from the horrible first few matches. As usual the last two guys would both get world title shots with the winner getting the opening match instead of the real main event, but going on before Rock vs. Cena is hardly torture.

Ratings Comparison

Daniel Bryan vs. Mark Henry vs. Big Show

Original: C-

Redo: D+

Bella Twins/Divas of Doom vs. Alicia Fox/Kelly Kelly/Eve Torres/Tamina

Original: D+

Redo: D+

Kane vs. John Cena

Original: D+

Redo: D+

Brodus Clay vs. Drew McIntyre

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

CM Punk vs. Dolph Ziggler

Original: B

Redo: B+

Royal Rumble

Original: B+

Redo: A-

Overall Rating

Original: B-

Redo: B

Just like last year, not much difference here.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2012/01/29/royal-rumble-2012/>

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>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2011: They Wouldn't

Royal Rumble 2011

Date: January 30, 2011

Location: TD Garden, Boston, Massachusetts

Attendance: 15,113

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, Matt Striker

This is a weird Rumble as for one year only they tried having forty people in the Rumble instead of the usual thirty. It didn't quite work so they never tried it again, but for this year as a result there are only four matches on the whole card: two world titles, a Divas match and the Rumble itself. This is one of those rumbles I barely remember. Let's get to it.

The opening video is exactly what you would expect.

Smackdown World Title: Edge vs. Dolph Ziggler

Edge is defending and if he uses the spear here, Ziggler wins the title because Vickie is a crooked boss. Dolph takes over early and pounds on Edge in the corner but gets whipped across the ring to shift momentum. This is during Cole's heel phase so he's very annoying at this point. A gutbuster gets two for the champion and he takes things to the floor. Ziggler is rammed into the apron and the barricade for good measure as Edge stands tall.

As they come back in, Ziggler grabs a neckbreaker for two and hits an elbow to the chest. Off to a chinlock as Dolph stays on the neck. The fans cheer for Edge of course and he fights up, only to get caught in a

middle rope sunset flip. Edge comes back with a slingshot into the buckle and now Dolph is in trouble. A rollup out of the corner gets two for Edge but Dolph hits another neckbreaker for two of his own.

Off to the chinlock until Edge rolls out to the apron. Ziggler knocks him into the barricade and it's back inside for the chinlock. Edge fights up but they both try cross bodies to put both guys down. Ziggy misses a Stinger Splash in the corner and Edge catches him in a flapjack to put both guys down again. Edge counters the Fameasser into a sitout powerbomb for two more but he can't follow up.

The champion goes up but has to fight out of a superplex. Ziggler gets knocked down and hit by a top rope cross body, only for Ziggler to roll through for two. Now the fans start cheering for Ziggler as he gets two off a dropkick. The Zig Zag misses and Edge busts out the Edgecator of all things. Dolph grabs the rope so Edge dives at him on said ropes, only to clothesline himself on them.

The Fameasser gets two and both guys are down again. A big boot puts Ziggler down for about the seventh time and Edge gets into spear position. Like an idiot, Vickie reminds him of this, allowing Dolph to catch Edge in the sleeper. Edge rolls out of it and hits the Impaler for two as Vickie pulls the referee out of the ring. Vickie slaps Edge but the champion dodges a charging Dolph into a rollup for two.

She slaps Edge AGAIN so here's Kelly Kelly to take Vickie down. In the melee the Zig Zag hits for two and a BIG pop on the kickout. There's the sleeper and while trying to escape it, Edge knocks the referee down. Edge escapes the hold with a kind of Stunner and realizes there's no referee or Vickie so there's the spear to Ziggler. The referee wakes up and Edge hits an Unprettier to retain the title.

Rating: A-. Good stuff here again although the ending is kind of stupid. Eventually Edge would be stripped of the title for using the spear (I can't remember if it was here or another match) and Ziggler would have a stupid 45 minutes or less reign. I don't think anyone, including Dolph, considers that a real reign but hey, Ziggler is a former world champion so we have to respect him, right WWE?

We recap Orton vs. Miz. The champion Miz cashed in MITB on Orton back in November and beat him in a tables match at TLC. Tonight it's an actual match which means Miz is likely in trouble.

Miz says he'll win.

Raw World Title: The Miz vs. Randy Orton

Miz has Riley with him here. Orton pounds away to start as Cole is already on his knees to suck Miz off. The champ is knocked out to the floor and gets sent into the barricades a few times. Back in and Orton kicks him in the face before stomping away a bit. Cole is already on one of his rants about how noble Miz is in comparison to Edge. Orton chokes on the ropes a bit as Cole says that Orton should have stated in advance that he wanted to brawl.

Riley finally guillotines Orton on the top rope to give Miz a chance. Orton shrugs the offense off and slugs Miz down, only to miss a running knee in the corner. Cole stays on his rant about how awesome Miz is as Riley interferes some more. Cole high fives Riley and Miz hooks a chinlock for a bit. Striker continues his brilliance by saying Miz is working on the midsection to set up the SKULL Crushing Finale. A running knee to Orton's face gets two and it's back to the chinlock.

Randy blocks a German Suplex and elbows Miz down to break the momentum. Miz comes right back with a big boot to the face for two and the champion is getting frustrated. Miz goes up and gets crotched right back down, allowing Orton to hit his daddy's superplex for two. Randy starts his comeback with the clotheslines and the backbreaker to send Miz to the apron. Why would you go there against Orton? Perhaps it's because he can backdrop Orton out to the floor to counter and have Riley stomp away a bit.

A top rope ax handle gets two for Miz so he pounds away on Orton's head. Back to the chinlock but Orton fights out of this one much faster. Not that it matters though as Orton gets sent through the ropes and out to the floor where Miz catapults him into the post. Orton gets back in at nine and is all fired up, only to get punched into the corner. Randy comes back with a clothesline and the powerslam before hitting the circle

stomp.

Riley breaks up something like a powerbomb, allowing Miz to hit a modified Reality Check for two. Both finishers are countered and Orton hits an Angle Slam of all things for two. I vaguely remember him using that around this time. Miz's attempt at walking out fails but he gets in something we can't see for two back inside.

Randy gets two off a rollup and there's the Elevated DDT. Orton loads up the RK0 but here's the New Nexus for a distraction. Riley tries to come in but in a great looking spot, Orton LAUNCHES Riley over the top (and over the referee) onto Nexus. The RK0 hits but Punk runs in with a GTS to keep the belt on Miz. Cole literally jumps for joy.

Rating: B. I was digging this match a lot and the ending would wind up making a lot more sense than it does on paper here. While Punk would obviously go on to feud with Punk for a few months, Miz would face Jerry Lawler of all people at Elimination Chamber before moving on to the main event of Wrestlemania. Good stuff here though and one of Miz's best matches ever. Gee you hear that a lot when Orton is the opponent don't you?

Dashing Cody Rhodes will not be here tonight because of his shattered face. This would lead to Dr. Cody Doom which was pretty awesome and then wound up being wasted.

Fans say who they think is going to win the Rumble.

Divas Title: Natalya vs. Laycool

Nattie beat them in a handicap match to win the title and this is the rematch. Before anything gets going though, we have an e-mail from the anonymous GM. We're going to make it a four way just for the sake of making it a fourway and we want to have a new champion.

Divas Title: Michelle McCool vs. Layla vs. Eve Torres vs. Natalya

Nattie is defending as I said and this is one fall to a finish. Laycool goes after both other chicks to start and Eve gets double teamed. Natalya comes back with a slingshot to send Layla into Michelle as Matt actually

tries to analyze this match. We get down to Laycool squaring off but before they do anything, Eve and Nattie come back in.

Layla breaks up the Sharpshooter on Eve so Natalya puts the Sharpshooter on BOTH OF THEM AT ONCE. Layla hits the neckbreaker on Eve to send her to the floor but Michelle kicks Eve out to the floor. Michelle misses a bit boot and takes Layla's head off by mistake. She and the champ fight to the floor, allowing Eve to sneak in and steal the pin with a moonsault.

Rating: D+. That might become my default rating for Divas matches as most of them fall into the same category: not bad but nothing worth seeing at all for the most part. The double Sharpshooter was cool but it's a five second sequence out of a five minute match. Also, why am I supposed to be excited about Eve winning the title when she wasn't even important enough to put into the match in the first place?

Michelle is mad because she had Natalya covered at the same time but the referee didn't see it.

A cleanshaven Daniel Bryan is excited for the Rumble because he could win. He's with Gail at this point and the Bells come up to offer their condolences for trying to hook up with Bryan. The Bellas imply they're better looking than Gail and a fight breaks out.

Rumble By The Numbers time!

40 entrants

1 winner

24 winners

656 losing entrants

39 eliminations by Shawn, a record

26 WWE Hall of Famers who have competed

183,932lbs that has competed in the Rumble, or 92 tons or 492 Big Shows

2 women who have competed in the Rumble

11 eliminations by Kane in 2001, a record

13 straight Rumbles for Kane, also a record

62:12 Mysterio lasted in the 2006 Rumble

1 second, the record for shortest time in the Rumble, held by Santino Marella

3 wins by Austin

2, the number of wins that spot #1 has produced, the same as #30

70% of winners have gone on to win the title at Mania

Royal Rumble

40 entrants this year and it's Punk at #1 and before #2 comes out, here's the Corre (Barrett, Jackson, Slater and Gabriel) to surround Punk. They jump him until Punk's Nexus guys come out for the save. The GM sends an e-mail that says everyone not named CM Punk needs to get out or they're out of the Rumble. Anyway Daniel Bryan is #2 and the internet explodes.

They speed things up to start and Bryan fires off some kicks to the ribs. Striker talks about how the internet loves this match as Bryan is sent to the apron. The dueling chants begin and Bryan misses a dropkick in the corner. Justin Gabriel is #3 and immediately goes after Punk. Bryan clotheslines CM down and Gabriel misses the 450, allowing Bryan to dump Justin out.

Zack Ryder, still a heel, is #4. He immediately takes Bryan down and hits the Broski Boot to both guys. Bryan launches Ryder into the air for a Rough Ryder into Punk, only to get dumped to the floor by Daniel. Back to Punk vs. Bryan until William Regal is #5. He starts busting out the knees to the face and some suplexes before hitting the knee trembler to Punk. The student and the teacher (Bryan and Regal) slug it out before Punk kicks the teacher in the head. Bryan kicks Punk in the head for kicking Regal in the head and only Daniel is left standing.

Ted DiBiase is #6 along with Maryse. Bryan rips off kicks to Regal before

trying to dump Ted out. John Morrison is #7 to a BIG pop. He comes in (after slipping) with a slingshot kick to Regal and the Flying Chuck to Punk. A C4 takes Bryan down but DiBiase dumps Morrison to the apron. As Regal is eliminated, we get at the time the best Rumble save ever, as Morrison is knocked from the apron but catches himself on the barricade. His feet never touch as he pulls himself up to the barricade, tightrope walks down to the steps, jumps to said steps, kicks Regal in the head, and gets back in. That blew my mind live.

Yoshi Tatsu (Striker calls him the Poison Fist of the Pacific Rim because Striker likes to think he's smart) is #8 and goes right after Punk. Husky Harris is #9 and he beats everyone not named Punk before standing guard over his leader. Chavo Guerrero is #10 as these intervals are getting really short. Chavo loads up Three Amigos on DiBiase but Punk breaks it up. Now Punk takes two of them but Morrison breaks it up at two. So this time Morrison takes two suplexes but BRYAN breaks it up and finally Daniel takes all three suplexes.

Chavo takes Harris down with a middle rope missile dropkick and Mark Henry is #11. For some reason Chavo dives on him and is immediately dumped out. Yoshi is sent out as well as JTG is #12. Michael McGillicutty is #13 and he takes out JTG almost immediately before teaming up with Harris to dump DiBiase. Christ Masters is #14 and puts Punk to the apron with the Masterlock until McGillicutty makes the save. Masters and Bryan slug it out until Otunga is #15, giving Punk and the Nexus four members.

They gang up on and toss Bryan pretty easily and there goes Masters as well. There goes Morrison too and the elimination of Henry clears the ring. Tyler Reks from ECW gets to come in at #16 and you can figure out what happens to him in about 40 seconds. Vladimir Kozlov is #17 but the numbers catch up with him and it's Punk who gets to do the honors. We're just waiting for Cena to come out now.

Instead it's R-Truth at #18 and it's the same result. The only highlight is Punk hitting the knee in the corner and saying WHAT'S UP with a big goofy grin on his face. There goes Truth but Great Khali returns at #19 to scare Punk half to death. He fights all of the Nexus off and manages to dump Harris which is a big breakthrough. Khali chops Punk down and

Mason Ryan, also of the Nexus, is #20. After a brief slugout he puts Khali out and we're right back where we were.

In our second major return of the Rumble, Booker T is #21 and Striker FREAKS. Booker fires off as many kicks as he can and hits the Bookend on McGillicutty. You know we're getting the Spinarooni but Ryan throws Booker out as soon as it's over. Punk: "WE'RE GOING TO WRESTLEMANIA!" All hope seems to be lost but heeeeeeeeeeeere's Cena at #22. The hometown boy charges at the ring and puts out McGillicutty, Ryan and Otunga to get us down to one on one.

Cena pounds away and escapes the GTS before a double clothesline puts both guys down. Hornswoggle is #23 and is immediately kicked down by Punk. Atta boy CM! Punk loads up the GTS but Cena escapes and this the AA to toss Punk out. In next is Tyson Kidd at #24 and he gets caught between Cena and Horny. The Swogg busts out a headscissors before Cena hits the AA. In a decent visual, Horny hits an AA of his own allowing for the elimination by Cena.

Heath Slater is #25 and DEAR GOODNESS he looks hilarious in trunks. He might be as pale as Sheamus used to be and the visual is horrible. Horny hits some Sweet Shin Music and a Stunner followed by a double Five Knuckle Shuffle. There's a Tadpole Splash and Slater is gone. Cole sounds like he's about to be sick. Kofi Kingston is #26 and this should be interesting. Kofi fires off some kicks of course followed by some punches in the corner until Jack Swagger is #27.

Cole talks about the luck of #27 and Jerry correctly points out that the number is lucky in 30 man matches, not 40. Swagger hits the Vader Bomb on both full sized guys but as he goes after Hornswoggle, Kofi cross bodies Swagger down. There's the Boom Drop with horny as a stepping stone and it's King Sheamus at #28. Cena takes the Irish Curse and there's only Horny left to face Sheamus. Horny loads up Sweet Shin Music but Cena saves Horny from elimination. The tiny man loads up the Tadpole Splash but gets Brogue Kicked out, thank goodness.

Mysterio is #29 and he hits a pair of headscissors on Swagger and Sheamus but Sheamus breaks up the 619. Trouble in Paradise takes Sheamus down but

Swagger takes Kofi down. Rey hits a headscissors to put Swagger on the apron and a 619 gets the elimination. Wade Barrett is #30 and it turns into a bunch of mini brawls. Winds of Change take Cena down and Ziggler is #31. There's a pretty big talent pool in there at the moment with Cena, Mysterio, Sheamus, Kingston, Ziggler and Barrett.

Barrett and Dolph go after Cena but Mysterio makes a save for no apparent reason. Diesel is the final big return at #32 and there's your big pop. This is the appearance that set up Diesel vs. HHH and Punk for the latter half of the year. Everyone is stunned but I think it's just at how black Diesel has gotten his hair. That's some high quality polish. We get a Diesel chant and he cleans house in a much more effective way than you would expect. Diesel's style is really good for something like this as he does so many basic moves but he's so big that they look that much more impressive.

Drew McIntyre is #33 and we get a LOUD let's go Diesel chant. Diesel gets caught in 619 position and in a very rare occurrence, the move gets booed. Alex Riley is #34 and Cole loses his mind when Miz's music hits again. Diesel misses a big boot and gets kicked out by Barrett. The DIESEL chant rocks the Garden as Miz sits in on commentary. Big Show is in at #35, so Striker talks about how much taller Show is than the tallest player in the NHL. For once I agree with Cole when he says "WHO CARES???" We know Big Show is tall, and simply telling us he's taller than a guy who is 6'9 doesn't change anything.

Show and Diesel have a staredown in the aisle which is a FAR better (and actual) illustration of how big Show is. McIntyre and Sheamus get dropped by Show and there's a chokeslam for Barrett. Show dumps Ziggler as Cena dumps Riley. Show shoves McIntyre out as Big Zeke is #36. He immediately throws out Show to a shockingly non-reaction. We have Barrett, Jackson, Kingston, Cena, Mysterio and Sheamus at the moment.

Santino is #37 and literally immediately breaks his record of 1 second in the Rumble. Jackson almost immediately decks him and knocks Santino to the mat and out to the floor which isn't an elimination. Remember that. Jackson tries to put Cena out and Del Rio is #38. He's still new at this point and hasn't gotten on almost everyone's nerves yet.

Striker tells us that Riley has been eliminated five minutes after it happens. Not only is he annoying but he's a bad broadcaster on top of that. Alberto wisely takes forever to get into the ring as Miz's voice sounds really hoarse. By long enough I mean Orton jumps him in the aisle at #39. There's a quick RKO to Del Rio and one for Sheamus as well. A third hits Kofi and he's gone. Sheamus is out too and it's time for Cena vs. Orton. John points to the sign but Kane's pyro goes off at #40 to complete the field and scare Cena to death.

So we've got Cena, Mystério, Barrett, Jackson, Del Rio, Orton and Kane in the ring. I've seen far worse. Kane focuses on Orton and hits the side slam, only to be run over by Big Zeke. Jackson misses a charge though and goes out via a low bridge. Mystério jumps into a chokeslam grip but Rey headscissors him out, only to be dumped by Barrett. Orton goes after Alberto while Cena beats up Barrett. Cena gets sent to the apron but gets back in via a shoulder to Wade's ribs.

Things slow down again and NOW we get Cena vs. Orton. The fans barely react to it though so Barrett breaks it up. There's an AA to Del Rio and here's Riley again. He distracts Cena enough to have Miz run in and dump Cena to get us down to Orton, Barrett and Del Rio in the ring. There's the backbreaker to Del Rio and Orton dumps Barrett, only to have Alberto sneak in on him to win the Rumble.

Rating: A. This was a VERY well done Rumble as they hit the three act structure and had a great balance of main event guys as well as new stars and legends. While it doesn't seem like a big shock now, Del Rio had only been around for about four months. This would be like a member of the Shield winning the Rumble in 2013. Excellent Rumble though and one of the best ever.

Del Rio celebrates.....AND SANTINO CRAWLS BACK IN! He went UNDER remember so the match isn't over yet. Del Rio doesn't see him coming and Santino hits the Cobra! Cole: "OH MY GOD!!!" He goes for the elimination but Del Rio reverses and dumps Santino out to really win. I remember watching this and my heart STOPPED as soon as Santino got back in. The exact words I said: "THEY WOULDN'T! THEY COULDN'T! Oh they didn't." This makes the match even better as the fans LOST IT when he got back in.

Ricardo is literally on the floor screaming Del Rio to end the show.

Overall Rating: A. The worst and only bad match was the Divas and you have looks in that one so how can this be anything below great? 2011 was the start of the good period for WWE and they kicked it off with a bang with a great Rumble here. This is an excellent show and well worth checking out. Good stuff here.

Ratings Comparison

Edge vs. Dolph Ziggler

Original: A-

Redo: A-

Miz vs. Randy Orton

Original: B

Redo: B

Eve Torres vs. Natalya vs. Layla vs. Michelle McCool

Original: D

Redo: D+

Royal Rumble

Original: A

Redo: A

Overall Rating

Original: A

Redo: A

This is why I don't see the point in redoing the newer shows: my taste hasn't changed much.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/30/royal-rumble-2011-his-name-is-alberto-del-rio/>

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>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2010: The Swerve That Made Sense

Royal Rumble 2010

Date: January 31, 2010

Location: Phillips Arena, Atlanta, Georgia

Attendance: 16,697

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, Matt Striker

We're getting close to the end of the run here with only three shows left. Tonight we've got the Rumble of course along with Undertaker defending against Mysterio and Sheamus defending against Orton. I remember really liking this one as the new generation had arrived and was rising up the card. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about the Road to Wrestlemania is beginning and how it determines what happens for months to come. This is called the most

star studded Rumble ever, which is a tagline that has been used before.

ECW Title: Christian vs. Ezekiel Jackson

Christian is defending and man that ECW ring announcer has an annoying voice. Regal is with Jackson here. According to Striker, Jackson went to Columbia Law School. Now there's a factoid that fell through the cracks. Jackson shoves Christian into the corner and then does it again into the ropes so the champion slaps him in the face. After a brief chase, Christian dropkicks Jackson out to the floor.

The springboard plancha takes Jackson out and we head back in. Christian finally gets caught in the corner and pounded on before having the Killswitch easily blocked. Instead Christian chokes away on the ropes and hits another shot to the face. Jackson throws Christian to the floor where Regal tries to throw him back in, earning himself an ejection. Off to a neck crank back inside which Jackson picks up into a kind of cobra clutch slam for two.

A vertical suplex gets two for Big Zeke and it's time for more choking. A sunset flip is easily blocked by Jackson and it's back to the chinlock. Striker tries to figure out what a peep is, as he knows it as a something made of chocolate. Some shots to the face get Christian out of trouble for awhile, or at least until a clothesline to the back of the head gets two.

Jackson hooks both of Christian's arms back for another hold before putting the champion on top. The superplex is blocked and Christian hits a top rope back elbow for two (LOVE that move). Jackson's big clothesline misses and a middle rope dropkick gets two for the champion. A spinwheel kick gets two on Jackson but a swan dive misses and gives Zeke a near fall as does a backbreaker.

The tornado DDT gets ANOTHER two for Christian so Jackson takes his head off with a clothesline. Off to a sleeper from Christian when the Killswitch doesn't work but Jackson counters into a powerslam position to ram Christian's back into the buckle. Christian slides down Jackson's back and grabs the Killswitch out of nowhere to retain.

Rating: C+. Trim two minutes out of this and it goes WAY up in quality. The period of near falls went on too long without getting any significant heat from the crowd. Jackson would get the title in a little over two weeks on the final episode of ECW because if there's one man that should be the final ECW Champion, it's a musclehead that could barely get through a five minute match most of the time.

Cryme Tyme come in to try to get a second spot in the Rumble from Teddy and Tiffany. Khali says "no dice homeslice" to selling their spot because he's keeping it real. Apparently he's learned his English from Family Matters (Singh's words, not mine). Ok then. Anyway US Champion the Miz comes in and laughs which causes him to have to defend against MVP.

Orton is in the back when Cody Rhodes comes in. He's there for Randy in the title match tonight but that's not all. Apparently DiBiase isn't in on this because his mind is on winning the Rumble and taking the title from Orton.

US Title: The Miz vs. MVP

A quick clothesline gets two for MVP and he works on the champ's ribs to start. Miz gets a boot up in the corner to slow him down but MVP comes right back with a belly to back suplex for two. They head to the floor for this gem from Striker: "Miz is one of the most recognizable faces on this planet." I don't think Miz is one of the most recognizable faces in this match.

Back in and Miz sends MVP to the apron and gets kicked into the table on the floor. Not that this is treated like anything of note because the announcers are laughing about Sherri Shepard from The View. Miz sends shoulders into MVP's ribs in the corner followed by the running corner clothesline. A top rope double ax gets two for Miz and we hit the chinlock.

After that eats up some time, MVP pounds away with all of his usual stuff. Ballin hits and a running boot to the side of the head gets two for the challenger. A big shoulder block gets the same for MVP but he misses a running boot in the corner. MVP grabs three straight quick near falls but gets caught in a small package for the pin to keep the title on

Miz.

Rating: D+. If there was a reason for this to be on PPV other than the show was running short, I don't know what it was. Miz didn't look like anything special out there but somehow he would be world champion a year later. MVP on the other hand would be out of the WWE but he did well enough in Japan. Nothing to see here other than a filler match.

Post match MVP hits the Playmaker on Miz and gets booed LOUDLY. He lost completely clean so the booing is deserved.

Show and Jericho, the former tag team champions, run into each other. Show accuses him of being jealous of the chemistry Show and Miz have but Jericho brushes it off. He calls the crowd gelatinous worms before pointing out all of the similarities he and Miz have. Show says he'll throw both Miz and Jericho out to win the Rumble. R-Truth pops up and says he'll do the same. Show leaves Jericho standing there much to Jericho's chagrin.

DiBiase wishes Orton luck and says he's got Randy's back. Orton asks where Cody is but DiBiase doesn't know. This was during the time when Legacy was about to die and both members were trying to get on Randy's best side. DiBiase claims that Rhodes only wants to win the Rumble but Orton has heard enough. He doesn't want anyone's help and gets a clear face pop in response.

The National Guard is here.

Raw World Title: Sheamus vs. Randy Orton

Sheamus won the title in a shocker last month at TLC and is heel here. He's also still not that good and wouldn't really hit his stride for about a year and a half. They stare at each other to start and my goodness is Sheamus pale. A dropkick puts the champion down but he comes right back with a running ax handle. Sheamus gets in a shot to the arm and we head to the floor where said arm is sent into the steps.

Back in and Orton goes for the knee and things slow down a bit. Orton wouldn't really pick up the pace of his offense until about the following

year which made his matches pretty hard to sit through. Sheamus comes back by sending Orton's shoulder into the post twice and hitting some shoulder blocks in the corner. That gets him nowhere though as Orton takes out the knee again and knocks Sheamus to the floor.

They head inside again and yet AGAIN momentum shifts back to Sheamus as he hits a DDT on the arm for two. Off to an armbar for a bit before they slug it out to the boo/yay chants. Orton wins the slugout but walks into the Irish Curse for two. The High Cross is escaped and Orton kicks Sheamus in the head to send him to the outside. Orton gets ready for the RKO but Rhodes jumps the guardrail and blasts Sheamus in the back before running away. The referee sees it though and despite Orton hitting the RKO, he's disqualified and Sheamus keeps the title. Lame ending to a pretty lame match.

Rating: D+. Like I said, Sheamus just wasn't very good yet. He was still this big imposing brawler who pounded on people and that's about it. There was indeed a story in the match but it wasn't a very entertaining one as they just kept beating on each other's limbs but when there's no difference because of the beating, the story doesn't work. The ending didn't help either but it did set up something in the future.

Post match Orton snaps on Cody as DiBiase comes down to save his partner. While Orton yells at Cody in the corner, Sheamus comes back in and lays out Randy with a Brogue Kick.

We recap Mickie vs. McCool. This was an awkward feud as Mickie won the title shot in a triple threat and then Laycool made fun of Mickie for being fat. This is of course odd as Mickie is a professional athlete and gorgeous and would only be called fat by a crazy person. It's also pretty disturbing when you consider how WWE pushes the Divas as role models. The final bit of it was a segment where Mickie got beaten down and covered in food.

Women's Title: Michelle McCool vs. Mickie James

Pre match Michelle runs her mouth about how fat Mickie is and accuses her of skipping out on the match. Michelle offers cake and here's Layla in a Mickie Pig costume. The real Mickie sprints to the ring and hits a Thesz

Press on Layla on the floor. She heads inside, sends Michelle into Layla and hits the MickieDT for the pin and the title in 20 seconds.

Post match the other Divas bring out a cake and smash it into Laycool's faces.

We recap Mysterio vs. Undertaker. Rey won the shot by slamming a cage door onto Batista's head to escape because that's what heroes do. Taker said he'll show no mercy on Mysterio so Rey uses the same line everyone does on Taker: he isn't afraid. Batista beat up Mysterio as well, claiming that Undertaker and the world title was his.

Smackdown World Title: Rey Mysterio vs. Undertaker

Mysterio, in the deep south, comes out wearing a white hood. Striker talks about Lawler being in the ring with Kamala and Lord Humongous (Sid) because he thinks it makes him sound interesting. He's trying to make a comparison to being in the ring with Undertaker, but if he was as smart as he thinks he is, he would ask Jerry what it's like to be in the ring with Undertaker himself, which would save a lot of headaches.

Rey fires off some shots in the corner before Taker grabs him by the neck and throws him up and over the top and out to the floor. That looked awesome. Back to the apron and Rey fires off strikes to the face, only to get punched right back down to the floor by a single shot. Taker misses the legdrop on the apron but hits it the second time before heading back in. Rey counters a chokeslam into the 619 but Taker easily grabs the legs. Tombstone is countered and Taker misses an elbow drop.

Rey tries a springboard cross body but jumps into a boot to the chest. We head to the floor again and there's another big boot to the head to take Rey down. A third big boot keeps Rey down but the fourth misses and Taker sends his leg around the post. Rey hits a baseball slide to send the leg into said post and Taker is in trouble. The seated senton off the apron is caught and Taker puts him back on the apron, only to be caught by an Asai Moonsault to put both guys down.

Taker grabs Rey by the throat and slams him into the barricade. The champion's nose is busted a bit. Taker does that lifting wristlock of his

to crank on the arm a bit before punching Rey down in the corner for a bit. A big side slam gets two for the guy who would use a side slam in this match as Striker goes into this big speech about how the blood shows that Undertaker is mortal. Seriously, it's a BLOODY NOSE. Watch the freaking Lesnar match in the Cell when the blood is literally dripping from Taker's head and down onto Lesnar's body.

Rey starts firing off some punches but a single shot from Taker is enough to put him back down. A jawbreaker finally staggers the big man and they do a kind of cross body, although Taker counters into something like Langston's Big Ending, so it's hard to say which hurt worse. Taker sits up so Rey kicks him in the face. Why has no one done that before? Rey drops the dime (springboard legdrop) for two but Taker kills him with a big clothesline. The Last Ride is countered and the 619 hits as does a second one, but the West Coast Pop is countered into the Last Ride to retain the title.

Rating: B. This was solid stuff for the most part for a few reasons. First of all, they didn't make Taker look ridiculous to get into position for Rey's moves. That's my biggest issue with most of Rey's battles against giants: how stupid the big men look. The other good thing here is that Taker wasn't knocked silly after just a few moves. Rey only hit maybe a dozen offensive moves here other than basic strikes and it wouldn't have made sense to have Taker in major trouble. Finally, Rey can bump like crazy when he's trying to. The only issues here are the lack of a threat to Taker and Striker's commentary. Chill out already man.

Shawn is watching in the back when Kane comes in and says Shawn's obsession with Taker is unhealthy. This is KANE calling something unhealthy. He warns Shawn to cool it with Taker because it won't end well. Kane leaves and HHH comes in. Shawn apologizes for whatever happened on Raw which apparently isn't important enough to specify. HHH agrees Shawn vs. Taker is meant to be, but it won't be by winning the Rumble.

Rumble by the Numbers time:

23 Winners

627 entrants eliminated

36 eliminations by Austin

11 eliminations by Kane in 2001

2002 was the last Rumble in Atlanta

62:12 Rey was in the Rumble in 2006

2 seconds was the record for 20 years until Santino broke it last year

3 wins for Austin

2 win for #1, the same as #30

70% of the winners win at Mania

Royal Rumble

Dolph Ziggler is #1 and Evan Bourne is #2. Bourne snaps off a headscissors to start and follows up with a spinwheel kick to take Dolph down. Ziggler comes back with the Zig Zag but can't throw Evan out. Bourne decks Ziggler and hits Air Bourne as CM Punk of the Straightedge Society is #3. He slams the other two guys' heads together and dumps them out one after the other. Punk gets a mic and says that tonight is the greatest night in the history of the Straightedge Society. These two are just the first of 29 men who will challenge him, but they can be saved.

The clock starts running down, so Punk gives us the line of the night: "Excuse me, it's clobberin time." JTG is #4 and after a few clotheslines, he poses like an idiot in the corner and gets dumped. Punk gets the mic again and says that not everyone can be saved because they don't have his dedication. Great Khali is #5 and Punk immediately says he can make Khali greater by saving him. He asks Khali to raise his hand for the Straightedge Pledge but Khali lowers the hand onto Punk's head for the chop.

There's the Khali Vice and in less than 90 seconds, Beth Phoenix of all people is #6. She stares down Khali and gets picked up and placed on the apron. Beth kisses Khali but in the process pulls him over the top to

eliminate him. Phoenix gets back in and BEATS UP PUNK, only to get caught in a GTS to the chest. Would that really knock her out? Before she's dumped out, here's Zack Ryder at #7.

As Ryder gets in, Punk grabs the mic and says Zack has potential. PREACH IT BROTHER! Punk starts offering him a spot but his Ryder with the mic before he gets done with it. The fans are going nuts for Punk now and there goes Ryder. Punk talks about how great he is and wants to know who is next, but whoever it is, they're inferior to Punk. In at #8 is HHH as we enter the second segment of the Rumble.

They stare each other down and HHH starts punching. The facebuster has Punk staggered and a spinebuster puts him down as Drew McIntyre is #9. That gives us a tag champion in HHH and the IC Champion in Drew at the moment. HHH is looking a bit flabby here. He hits the high knee on McIntyre and escapes the GTS to eliminate Punk. DiBiase is #10 as we're flying through this.

HHH gets double teamed down in the corner until John Morrison, the guy that lost the title to McIntyre, is #11. He takes both heels down and pounds away on them before hitting a jumping DDT on Drew. Starship Pain almost completely misses Drew and HHH clotheslines John down. Kane is #12 and comes in with the top rope clothesline to HHH. There's a double chokeslam to McIntyre and Morrison before Kane tries to dump DiBiase.

Rhodes is #13 and saves Ted as he comes in. Morrison is sent to the apron and springboards back in, only to get dropkicked out of the air. Legacy goes after Kane but HHH saves him for no apparent reason. Cody saves himself from being eliminated and MVP is #14. Miz runs up behind him though and blasts MVP with the US Title. Morrison hits the Moonlight Drive on McIntyre to break up the Future Shock on Kane. HHH is in trouble in the corner and MVP is carried to the back.

Carlito is #15 and the ring is starting to get full. There's a Backstabber to HHH and one for Drew and Ted as well. Miz is #16 and hits a quick Finale on Carlito. Cue MVP to clothesline Miz out and eliminate himself in the process. Matt Hardy is #17 and lasts about 20 seconds before Kane puts him out. HHH immediately dumps Kane too and the ring is

a lot more empty all of a sudden.

HHH starts laying out everyone and Shawn is #18. Carlito is backdropped out, Rhodes and DiBiase are tossed, Morrison gets dumped, and DX puts out McIntyre to get us down to DX. Before anything can happen though, Cena is #19 to get us to the final third of the match. Cena cleans house and hits a double Shuffle before getting caught in the Pedigree. Out of nowhere Shawn superkicks HHH out to pop the crowd BIG.

Shelton Benjamin in that stupid gold period is #20. He hits Paydirt on both guys but gets dumped by Cena in less than 50 seconds. Yoshi Tatsu is #21 and doesn't even make it 30 seconds. Big Show is #22 and Cena is shaken. Big Show RUNS down to the ring and house is cleaned. Shawn and Cena try to eliminate each other but Show pulls Shawn back in for some reason. What's up with that tonight?

Mark Henry is #23 and we get a quick battle of the giant. Who would think those two would have a world title feud a year and a half later and be REALLY popular? Henry slams Show and falls on Cena as he tries an AA. Show spears Henry down and Chris Masters is #24. Masters tries the Masterlock on Show and gets dumped for his efforts. Now Henry goes after Show but Shawn breaks it up for some reason. R-Truth is #25 and actually dumps BOTH big guys. There's something you wouldn't expect.

Truth hits a Stroke on Cena and Jack Swagger is #26. All three guys get Vader Bombs and Swagger goes old school with a very slow Oklahoma Stampede. Jack knocks Michaels to the apron but can't get the elimination. Kingston is #27 and cleans house on Swagger, hitting the Boom Drop and dumping him out with a nice leverage move. Truth puts Kofi on the apron but gets pulled out by a reverse headscissors.

Jericho is #28 but after cleaning about half the house, Cena grabs an AA to put him down. Shawn adds the top rope elbow and tunes up the band but Kofi hits Trouble in Paradise to take him out. Cena dumps Kofi but walks into a Codebreaker. Everyone is down and EDGE makes his big return at #29. That's rather brilliant instead of waiting for the big surprise at #30, we get a SWERVE that actually makes sense.

Everyone gets a spear and Jericho is out. Edge is back about six months

early and it's Edge-0-Matics all around. Batista is #30, giving us a final four of Shawn, Cena, Edge and Batista. Not bad at all. It's power all around but Edge spears him down. Everyone is down now Shawn gets up first and hits the forearm on Cena followed by the nipup.

Shawn slams every American in sight and drops the top rope elbow on Cena. Batista takes one too as Edge is still down in the corner. Sweet Chin Music hits Cena and there's one for Batista as well. Edge clotheslines Shawn to the apron and Michaels superkicks Edge back in, only to get knocked out by Batista. The crowd gasps HUGE at that and Shawn is about to cry. Shawn gets back in and superkicks the referee to vent some frustration. Shawn FINALLY leaves and Cena escapes the Batista Bomb before dumping Batista out. Edge misses the spear but throws out Cena a second later to go to Wrestlemania.

Rating: A-. This is kind of a hard one to grade. They definitely followed the three act structure which helped a lot and the match was VERY fast paced. I mean, the longest anyone was in there was Cena and he barely broke 20 minutes. The problem with that is it doesn't give anything time to develop. The main story was Shawn which is fine and he would get to Mania at the end of the day anyway. It's a really fun Rumble but not one of the best ever.

Overall Rating: B. The Rumble is very solid and the rest has nothing terrible so we'll call it a good show overall. Things would get a lot more interesting soon after this with the rise of the Nexus and a very solid Wrestlemania. This was also a time of transition for the company as a lot of the guys in this show would be gone by the end of the year. Anyway good show here and worth checking out.

Ratings Comparison

Christian vs. Ezekiel Jackson

Original: C+

Redo: C+

Miz vs. MVP

Original: B-

Redo: D+

Sheamus vs. Randy Orton

Original: B

Redo: D+

Mickie James vs. Michelle McCool

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

Undertaker vs. Rey Mysterio

Original: C-

Redo: B

Royal Rumble

Original: A

Redo: A-

Overall Rating

Original: A-

Redo: B

Dang I liked Sheamus a lot more than I thought I did.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/29/royal-rumble-count-up-2010-one-of-the-best-ever/>

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>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

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

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

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 forearm 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 heeeeeeeere'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>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

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 Mystério, 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 Adadle 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 forearm 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:

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

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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