

Impact Wrestling – January 16, 2014: The Main Story Actually Put Me To Sleep

Impact Wrestling

Date: January 16, 2014

Location: Von Braun Center, Huntsville, Alabama

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Tazz

Tonight is the first night of a double week Genesis special. There are a lot of matches set up for the next two weeks but it's not clear which are tonight. We'll be getting some combination of Ethan Carter III vs. Sting, Kurt Angle vs. Bobby Roode in a cage, James Storm vs. Gunner for the Feast or Fired case and Bully Ray vs. Mr. Anderson. TNA usually nails these Clash of the Champions style shows so let's get to it.

We open with a very nice tribute to Mae Young with Tazz saying some kind things about his time with her. Nothing wrong with that.

Recap of the unification match from last week.

Spud is in the ring to insult Alabama and introduce Dixie Carter, in case you didn't get enough of her last week. We get the usual don't cross the boss speech before Dixie gives us our second recap of last week's events. The fans want AJ but Dixie says tonight is about the new champion. Magnus comes out to do the same speech you've heard a dozen times about how this is a new era and calls it the Reign of Magnus. He hands Dixie one of the titles because we wouldn't be here without her.

Dixie says there are some others to thank and brings out the BroMans, Zema Ion, Gail Kim, Lei'D Tapa, Bad Influence and Bobby Roode. Tonight is the beginning of Dixie Carter's TNA, but for that to happen, everyone has to stand tall and united as one. The only amusing part of this: as Dixie talks about winning tonight, Spud can barely hold the TNA title belt because he's so small. That guy continues to entertain me. Dixie brings out Ethan Carter III in pink ring gear, making him look like Rick Martel.

Before Ethan can say anything, the lights go out and Sting is in the crowd, pointing the bat down to the ring as we take a break.

Back with Sting in the same place, asking if this is the future that Dixie is talking about. There are a lot of people in the back that can't be bought no matter what. They have a thing called honor which is something Dixie can never have. Another amusing note: Sting is standing in front of a No Standing sign. Sting talks about bringing Magnus into the Main Event Mafia because he's the future of wrestling.

No one thought he would sell out though, and that's part of why this is a house divided. Sting says "we" will fight back tonight but Dixie says she only sees him. Samoa Joe, ODB, Eric Young, James Storm and Joseph Park hit the ring for a fight, soon to be joined by Gunner. Eventually the ring is cleared out except for Sting and Carter with Sting holding the bat up to Carter's chest and blasting him in the ribs as we take another break.

Back with the good guys ruling the ring and the heels cowering on the ramp. Joe says they're here for a fight and not leaving until they get into one. Spud, in pink pants no less, brings out Brian Hebner, saying Joe might just get what they want. We're getting a twelve man tag RIGHT NOW.

Samoa Joe/James Storm/Gunner/ODB/Eric Young/Joseph Park vs. Lei'D Tapa/Zema Ion/Bro Mans/Bad Influence

Joe pounds away on Zema Ion to start as everyone else fights on the floor. We get the always cool sidestep from Joe to avoid a middle rope cross body. ODB and Tapa get into the ring for a few moments until Storm and Daniels come in instead. There have been no tags and only now are a handful of people getting on the apron. Gunner throws Kaz to the floor and now there's no one in the ring.

Eric and Robbie get into the ring as Joe is now on his third corner of the match. Young and Park double elbow Jesse but Robbie breaks up Eric's top rope elbow. Zema sends Eric to the floor but turns around to see ODB grabbing her chest. A fall away slam sends Ion flying but Tapa runs ODB down, knocking her to the floor. Daniels comes in to work over Young and

gets two off a leg lariat.

Young comes back with a belly to belly suplex and it's off to Joe for some fat man power. The backplash gets two on Daniels with Kaz making the save. Joe dives through the ropes to take out the Bro Mans as a lot of things break down. Kaz breaks up an attempted Park dive but busts Park's lip open in the process. For the first time ever, Park goes after his partners by taking down Gunner and Storm, leaving Joe to put Daniels in the Clutch for the tap out at 7:32.

Rating: D+. This was straight out of the Russo playbook: throw everyone out there at once and hope the fans are so impressed by the insanity that they don't care about the lack of a story. TNA is walking a very thin line right now with this latest heel stable, even if it's a looser version than usual. Hopefully it doesn't turn out like the rest, but that's probably the case.

Velvet Sky is seen talking to Austin Aries in the back until Chris Sabin comes up and demands to talk to her in the ring.

Kurt Angle arrives and is looking for Dixie and/or Al Snow, the latter of whom told Angle that he had a family emergency.

Sabin is in the ring to yell at Velvet for having secret meetings with Austin Aries but the man himself interrupts. Aries calls Sabin the worst boyfriend ever and says that even though he's a vegan, he might make an exception for a piece of pigeon pie. Velvet looks flattered and Aries keeps up the charm by calling Velvet an extremely hot woman.

Chris cuts Aries off by saying he tells Velvet what to do, but Aries says he's been telling Velvet to do what she wants to do. Sabin says she's his and gives her a little spank to prove it. Austin wants one more match with Sabin for the title and Velvet locked in a small cage at ringside. Sabin says no, but Velvet takes the mic and says she'll do it. She goes off on Sabin by saying she never wanted to be involved in this. Sabin has treated her like garbage lately, so if he loses next week she might be looking for someone else.

Angle has already changed into his wrestling gear and is still looking

for Dixie.

Pat Kenney (I think) tells a cameraman to shoot everything he sees backstage. Sam Shaw comes by and Kenney congratulates him on his match last week, but politely advises Shaw to stay away from Christy Hemme and focus on his career. Shaw snaps and destroys Kenney, beating him down with Kenney's own shoe. Also it's Samuel, not Sam.

Ethan Carter practices his catchphrase when Magnus comes in to say believe in yourself. Magnus got to the top by himself and Ethan can do the same.

Bully Ray comes to the ring for his No DQ match with Anderson but Ken jumps him from behind as we go to a break before a bell.

Bully Ray vs. Mr. Anderson

No DQ. We come back from a break with Anderson ramming Ray (back in his old pre-Aces attire and music) into the announcers' table and heading back inside, only to have Ray block the Mic Check. A double clothesline puts both guys down as Tazz talks about Anderson wearing the hospital wristbands for his newborn twins. Both guys bring in chairs but it's Anderson getting in the first shot.

Ray comes back with a spear to put both guys down again and grabs his chain for a whipping. An elbow drop with the chain wrapped around the arm gets two on Anderson but Ray stops to yell at Earl, allowing Anderson to knock Ray's chair into his face with a chair of his own for two. Anderson pulls out a piece of a barricade that is clearly made of plastic, only to have it kicked into his face.

Ray misses a splash, allowing Anderson to go up for the Swanton. He hits the barricade as well but comes back with a Mic Check onto the "steel" for two. Anderson sets up a table in the corner and hits a Regal Roll through the wood for another two count. These kickouts are getting surprising. Another table is set up but Ray comes back with a Rock Bottom for two of his own. Bully pulls out the lighter fluid but takes too long to yell about Anderson's newborns. A Mic Check puts Ray down but Anderson goes to light the table on fire instead. Ray hits a quick low blow and

piledriver for the pin 9:40.

Rating: C. This falls under the “screw wrestling and let’s fight” category and that’s what it should have been. Ray is SO much better in this role than he was as the head of the lame biker gang which makes you all the more annoyed at Bischoff for having to fulfill his childhood dreams on national TV. Good fight here though not much of a match.

Angle finds Al Snow and demands to know what happened last week. Al says he was just following orders and gets thrown down.

Post break Angle is in the ring to demand that Dixie come face him right now. She went too far by bringing his family in and here’s Dixie to respond. Kurt goes on a rant about how Dixie isn’t the same person she used to be and how wrong it was to bring Kurt’s wife and kids into this situation. Dixie says she did it to protect him because he would have gotten hurt out here last week, meaning he couldn’t make her any money.

She doesn’t want him to be like AJ or Jeff Hardy and did what she did because it was best. Angle says he isn’t on her team but says he’ll be out here for the main event. Dixie postpones the match until next week and has Angle taken out by security. Roode comes in off the distraction and lays him out with the Death Valley Driver (dubbed the Roode Bomb).

Gail Kim and Lei’D Tapa jump Madison Rayne before Rayne’s title shot.

Knockouts Title: Gail Kim vs. Madison Rayne

Madison is challenging but is still beaten down from the attack from before the break. Kim beats her down even more by stomping away in the corner but Madison comes back with a rollup for two of her own. Madison can’t shake off all of the punishment from earlier though and staggers down off a forearm to the head. A shoulder block sends the champion to the floor but Tapa runs Madison over and chokes her down. Tapa is finally ejected but Gail does just fine by putting on the Figure Four around the post. The referee breaks it up and Rayne comes back with a flapjack and the Rayne Drop for the pin and the title at 4:00.

Rating: D. Just a match here but at least it ended the less than

enthraling Gail Kim title reign. Kim is very talented in the ring but she's a black hole of charisma, making her title reigns very difficult to sit through. Rayne could be an improvement if she's actually given the chance to do something different.

Dixie is with The Wolves (Eddie Edwards and Davey Richards of course) and offers them a tryout match next week. However, they've already signed contracts offered to them by a TNA investor. Eddie hands her an envelope, saying it'll change everything. Oh dear.

We run down the card for next week's show.

Sting vs. Ethan Carter III

Spud is guest referee to really keep the deck stacked. Sting takes Carter into the corner and is immediately warned for his actions. Carther does the same and nothing happens as you would expect. A dropkick sends Carter to the floor and Sting rams him into the steps for good measure. Back in and Spud gets in the way of a Stinger Splash attempt, allowing Ethan to take over with right hands of his own.

Sting avoids a splash and puts on the Scorpion but Spud jumps on his back. Instead Sting hits the Death Drop but Spud still won't count. Sting tries to force Spud's hand down but Magnus pulls Spud to safety. The champion takes his shirt off to reveal a referee's shirt. Ethan uses the distraction to roll up Sting and Magnus makes a fast count for the pin at 4:58.

Rating: D. This was all angle instead of a match. That being said, I'm already getting sick of the latest heel stable dominance with Sting fighting against the evil authority. We've covered this so many times already and there's almost nothing new that can be done with this idea.

Post break Sting says he wants one shot at the title and will do anything to get it. Magnus says Sting lost at Slammiversary and can't get a shot, but Sting appeals to his pride, saying Magnus must want to earn the title. He says men wear belts, so Magnus needs to stop being a boy. Magnus gets in the ring and says it's not going to work, but offers Sting a deal: next week it's Sting's contract vs. the title. Sting accepts to

end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. This is a hard one to grade. Believe it or not, I'm really digging everything in TNA other than the main event. The Ray solo heel character works, Sabin vs. Aries with Velvet in the middle is a nice midcard feud and Angle vs. Roode is an excellent feud in general. Then there's the main event, which is every stereotype TNA has rolled into one bloated feud. It's yet another heel stable/power struggle with Sting being the great white knight for the company. Count up how many times TNA has done that story and stop when you get to the second hand. I think that sums up everything wrong at the moment.

Results

James Storm/Gunner/ODB/Samoa Joe/Eric Young/Joseph Park b. Bad Influence/Zema Ion/Bro Mans/Lei'D Tapa – Koquina Clutch to Daniels

Bully Ray b. Mr. Anderson – Piledriver

Madison Rayne b. Gail Kim – Rayne Drop

Ethan Carter III b. Sting – Rollup

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Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2004:

With That One Guy

Royal Rumble 2004

Date: January 25, 2004

Location: Wachovia Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 17,289

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

This is the show where you can really see the next generation rising up. The main events other than the Rumble are Lesnar vs. Holly and HBK vs. HHH. Ok so maybe the next generation only comes up in the Rumble. Other than that we don't have much going on here but this show is all about Benoit in the Rumble. Let's get to it.

The opening video talks about Shawn vs. HHH because that's what people are watching the ROYAL RUMBLE for right? The theme of the video is that things can change in the blink of an eye.

Raw Tag Titles: Dudley Boys vs. Evolution

Flair and Batista are defending here and this is a tables match. Coach is ticked off at the Dudleys for putting him through a table six nights ago on Raw, because if there's one man you need to give a reason to be a heel, it's COACH. Batista makes fun of the Eagles because he hasn't broken through to the other side of the glass ceiling yet. The fight starts in the aisle as you would expect. This is one table to a finish, meaning only one guy has to go through to end it.

Bubba slides in a table but shoves it hard enough that it slides across the ring and hits Batista in the ribs on the other side of the floor. Flair gets double teamed to start and caught in a powerslam by D-Von. There's a table set up in the ring but Batista moves it before Flair gets suplexed through it. D-Von hits a Cactus Clothesline on Batista as Flair chops Bubba against a table in the corner.

Big Dave comes back in with some clotheslines to clean house but misses a charge into the post. The belly to back neckbreaker from the Dudleys puts him down and it's Flair getting double teamed again. According to JR, the

Dudleys are the only team to win the (non-vacant) world tag team titles at the Rumble. Coach heads to the ring to distract the Dudleys and prevent a 3D to Flair. Flair saves Coach and Batista hits a spinebuster to put D-Von through a table to retain.

Rating: D. This match fell into the same trap that all bad tables matches fall into: the dull set of spots that fail until one works for the win. You rarely get something that gets around this through sheer carnage such as the match at the 2000 Rumble, but this was just terrible. I have no idea what they were going for here as the fans were disappointed and they only had four and a half minutes to get into it. Also: real smart WWE. This is the right way to start a show in Philadelphia: have some of the most famous ECW guys ever lose.

Cena raps about winning the Rumble when RVD comes in to steal the joke. Weed jokes are made. Josh Matthews looks like the king of all tools here.

There's an empty seat for Mick Foley in the front row.

Cruiserweight Title: Rey Mysterio vs. Jamie Noble

Rey is defending. This is during the Nidia is Blind phase which didn't do anything for anyone. They speed things WAY up to start with Jamie avoiding the 619 and launching Rey into the air to take over. The champ gets draped over the top rope for two and a hard kick to the back gets the same.

Jamie hooks a chinlock which shifts into a seated abdominal stretch. Rey fights up and hits a dropkick and a springboard rana followed by the sitout bulldog for two. He springboards into a gutbuster from Noble for two though and momentum shifts again. Nidia accidentally grabs Noble's foot, allowing Rey to hit the 619 and springboard legdrop....for the pin? Huh?

Rating: D+. This was fast paced while it lasted, but those three words are the key: while it lasted. This barely broke three minutes which simply isn't enough for a PPV title match. Unless I was missing it there was no sign of an injury or anything like that, but the match ends that fast. I have no idea what they were going for here but it didn't work in

any way at all. That's a shame too because they were going well while it lasted.

Noble yells at Nidia post match.

We recap the battle of the Guerreros. Eddie was clearly the bigger star which was fine while they were champions, but once they lost the belts to the Bashams, Chavo blamed Eddie and turned on his uncle for losing his title. The Guerreros almost made up but they lost the rematch, after which Chavo let Eddie get double teamed by the Bashams. This was actually a pretty solid story despite how basic it was. Sometimes less is more. Oh and Kurt Angle was playing peacemaker and Chavo Guerrero Senior is in his son's corner.

Eddie Guerrero vs. Chavo Guerrero

Chavo bails to the floor before the bell and the fans are totally behind Eddie here. They fight over a lockup to start with no one being able to get an advantage. Chavo slaps Eddie in the face and now we're ready to go. We hit the mat for a bit before Eddie starts snapping off chops in the corner. Chavo shoulders him down and we have a standoff. They chop it out again and Eddie goes to the eye like a true Guerrero.

Back to the mat with Eddie working on the arm before Chavo nips up and hooks a rana to send them both to the floor. Chavo sends Eddie into the announce table to finally take over and get some of the aggression going. Back in and they get into a kind of MMA style brawl on the mat until Eddie hooks a cross armbreaker of all things. That goes nowhere so Chavo suplexes Eddie down for two, followed by the Three Amigos. Eddie counters a tornado DDT and hits Three Amigos of his own. Chavo is down so Eddie goes up and hits the Frog Splash for the pin. ANOTHER quick ending tonight.

Rating: C+. This was way better than the other matches, but this felt like it was missing fifteen minutes or so. Three matches so far have combined to be about fifteen minutes long which is pretty lame for a modern PPV, even for the Rumble. This could have been a lot more, but the feud was completely done after tonight. Eddie would become #1 contender on the following Smackdown.

Eddie destroys Chavo post match in a pretty heelish display. Chavo gets busted open.

Ad for Mick Foley's Greatest Hits and Misses. That's the most entertaining part of the show so far.

Benoit likes his odds even though he's #1 in the Rumble. Evolution comes up and says Orton is going to win the Rumble. Flair says Benoit may be great, but this is about Evolution tonight.

We recap Hardcore Holly vs. Lesnar. Brock broke Holly's neck (legit) and Holly gets a world title shot out of it a year later. This is the textbook definition of the Rumble title shot where no one buys the champion as being in any danger whatsoever.

Smackdown World Title: Brock Lesnar vs. Hardcore Holly

Holly jumps Lesnar in the aisle and sends him into the post because he wants to break Lesnar's neck. We get a bell and Holly misses an elbow off the top to give Brock control. They head to the floor where Holly's back is rammed into the apron and Lesnar hooks a reverse body vice back inside. That goes nowhere so Brock hits a Shell Shock for two and it's right back to the hold.

We shift to a bearhug and then one of the most wicked overhead belly to belly suplexes you'll ever see. Off to a kind of rear naked choke by Lesnar to keep things dull. Holly makes his comeback with the dropkick and hits the Alabama Slam but goes for a full nelson and revenge instead of the title. Holly hooks the hold and goes to the floor with it but has to break the count. The F5 hits a few seconds later to complete the inevitable.

Rating: D. This was Brock Lesnar defending the world title against Hardcore Holly on pay per view. If you can't figure out why this got the rating it got, I can't help you.

We recap HHH vs. HBK which is allegedly seven years in the making. I'm guessing THIS is supposed to be the FINAL blowoff to their feud instead of the classic in 2002.

Raw World Title: Shawn Michaels vs. HHH

HHH is defending and this is a last man standing match. They chop it out to start and punch each other in the corner a lot. Shawn tries a backslide before realizing that makes no sense here, so it's back to the chops. Michaels gets caught in a facebuster as things slow down a bit. A HARD whip into the corner has Shawn's back in trouble and a backbreaker makes it even worse.

Out of nowhere Shawn takes out the leg and hooks a Figure Four, because where would we be without a Flair tribute? That gets a five count so Shawn hits a chop block for a four. HHH low bridges Shawn and we head to the floor for a bit. HHH loads up the announce table but Shawn blocks a Pedigree attempt. They slug it out on the table with HHH getting knocked to the floor, drawing a bunch of booing from the bloodthirsty Philadelphia fans.

Back in and Shawn counters a Pedigree with a backdrop to the floor but he injures his back in the process. Shawn tries a springboard cross body to the floor but crashes through the table instead as only he can. Instead of letting the now busted open Shawn get counted out, HHH throws him back in for the count, which reaches seven. The champ pounds Shawn down a few times for a few counts, most of which don't get that far.

A fast spinebuster (literally, as Shawn was flying at HHH and it almost looked like a belly to belly instead of a spinebuster) gets about six. That's the problem with most last man standing matches: it's a big move then standing around for the count. That makes it very hard to get any kind of flow going to the match. HHH cracks Shawn in the back with a chair but Shawn gets up again. A Pedigree onto the chair is countered into a slingshot into the post, busting HHH open as well.

Now Shawn cracks HHH in the head with a chair, allowing HHH to do his weird "my head hurts and I'm not sure where I am" face. There's the forearm followed by the nipup from Shawn, followed by an atomic drop and the top rope elbow. That gets about seven so Shawn tunes up the band, only to walk into a low blow to put both guys down. Shawn hooks a sleeper which eventually gets an eight count before walking into a DDT to put

both guys down.

That gets a double eight count before we head to the corner. HHH tries a belly to back superplex but Shawn counters into a cross body for another double eight count. The Pedigree hits but it's only good for a nine. Shawn pops up out of nowhere with some more Sweet Chin Music, putting both guys down for ten which keeps the title on HHH.

Rating: C-. The problem here is exactly what I said earlier: this was a lot of laying around. The last seven minutes or so had about five moves combined, as most of the match was "move, lay down, move, lay down, move, lay down." The idea is supposed to be a ton of drama, but that didn't happen here. Shawn would turn into a jerk in the next few weeks and insert himself in the Mania main event because of this ending.

Rumble video with a focus on Benoit.

The Fink is ready to start the Rumble but here's Bischoff to run his mouth. He says that a Raw guy is going to win the Rumble because he's respected as a GM. He runs down ECW, which brings out Heyman for a brawl. Cue Austin on his ATV to say that these two are both in violation of the law (he was called Sheriff Austin at this point) and wants to know who started it. Heyman and Bischoff: "HE DID!" Both guys get Stunners and the fans love it.

Goldberg, #30 in the Rumble, doesn't get to talk because Lesnar comes in to interrupt him. Lesnar is called a coward, which will come into play later.

JR has to admit Foley is a coward because he isn't here yet.

Royal Rumble

Benoit is #1 and the Intercontinental Champion Randy Orton is #2. Two minute intervals here again. They pound away on each other to start with Benoit taking him to the mat to stomp away. Mark Henry is #3 when he was a fat power guy with no direction at all. Allow me to be more specific: he's still with Teddy Long. Benoit gets double teamed for awhile until Tajiri is #4. These intervals don't seem to be two minutes or anywhere

close to it.

The handspring elbow takes Orton down but Benoit rolls some Germans on Tajiri to take him down. Tajiri only gets two as I guess Benoit is conserving strength. Henry throws Orton to the apron but stops looking like an idiot. Bradshaw is #5 and he immediately clotheslines down everyone not named Benoit. Benoit takes offense to being left out and puts Bradshaw in the Crossface before pulling Bradshaw out. Eh he would get a nine month title reign starting in the summer so I feel no sympathy for him.

Rhyno is #6 as we're flying through this so far. He goes after the two starters as Tajiri fires off kicks on Henry. Tajiri gets a half Tarantula on Henry but Henry gets Gored, knocking Tajiri out in the process. Benoit clotheslines Henry out and we're down to three again. Matt Hardy is #7 and Benoit throws him to the apron almost immediately. In FAR less than two minutes, here's Scott Steiner at #8. Oh dear it's Scott Steiner at the Royal Rumble. This could be a disaster.

He starts firing off suplexes immediately but at least this time there are some t-bones to go with the belly to bellies. Benoit rolls some Germans on him as if to say THIS IS HOW YOU SUPLEX SOMEBODY. Things slow down a bit and here's Matt Morgan at #9. He takes Benoit down with a Batista Bomb takes Benoit down and pounds away on Orton in the corner.

The Hurricane is #10 and comes in off the top with a cross body to Hardy. He goes after Morgan for no apparent reason and is thrown out in less than twenty seconds. Morgan throws Hardy to the apron again but can't get him out. Booker T, complete with the stupid remix of his theme music with Booker singing, is #11. Booker immediately goes after Steiner in a revisiting of their WCW feud that no one was asking for.

Nothing of note happens until Kane is #12. This is after he buried Taker alive. For the first time. Steiner gets dumped by Booker during Kane's entrance. Kane starts firing off chokeslams and other various power moves for which he is well known. The clock runs down at #13 and there go the lights. A gong goes off and Kane PANICS. Booker uses the distraction to dump Kane and here's Spike Dudley at #13. He never makes it to the ring

as Kane destroys him for setting off the gong.

Everyone tries to throw each other out while laying on the ropes until Rikishi is #14. Benoit dumps Rhyno to keep us at six people (Benoit, Orton, Rikishi, Booker, Morgan, Hardy) in the ring. Morgan gets a Stinkface and nothing else happens for a bit. Renee Dupree with the French Tickler is #15. In a surprising moment, Dupree actually knocks Matt out, only to be superkicked out by Rikishi a second later.

A-Train is #16 and goes right for Rikishi. Benoit avoids the yet to be named Carbon Footprint and dumps Morgan. I love that they're keeping the ring from getting full. Orton dumps Rikishi and Booker as Shelton Benjamin is #17. Benoit dumps A-Train during his entrance and Orton dumps Shelton a few seconds later to get us back to two. Orton pounds on him a bit but they crack heads to put both guys down.

Lamont, the announcer for Ernest Miller (complete with the music that would go to Brodus Clay eight years later), runs out to introduce the Cat at #18. After some dancing (and singing by Tazz), Orton dumps him out. Miller would be released in like two weeks. Kurt Angle is #19 and he might be a bit harder to get out. He's fighting for AMERICA here so the fans tell him he sucks.

Benoit and Angle destroy each other with chops and punches as only they can while Orton is content to chill in the corner. Rico, now in his Adrian Street phase, is #20. He fires off some kicks but lasts about as long as you would expect him to in a match with Orton, Angle and Benoit. The RK0 takes care of Rico as Benoit rolls a ton of Germans on Angle. Test is #21....and is nowhere in sight.

Orton RK0's Angle and we cut to the back to see Test unconscious. Austin sees someone off camera and says they're #21. The off camera man and presumable attacker: MICK FREAKING FOLEY! Orton, the guy who spat in Foley's face and called him a coward, PANICS. The place goes nuts and Foley explodes on Orton, beating him half to death and hitting a Cactus Clothesline to put both of them out. This would lead to some AWESOME matches at Mania and Backlash which put Orton up to the world title in August.

Foley keeps beating on Orton as Christian is #22. Mick picks up the steps and BLASTS a security guy who tries to stop him. Orton comes back with two chair shots and fires back at Mick. They brawl up the ramp and Foley pulls out Socko, only to put it on Nunzio who comes in at #23. We haven't seen anything of the match for awhile but I can live with that for a hot brawl like this. Orton kicks Foley low and runs as we go back to the ring.

Angle is getting double teamed as Nunzio is down on the floor. Big Show is #24 and apparently that's Tazz's pick. Thankfully he's in the singlet and shorts again instead of the one piece swimsuit. Angle immediately goes after him but Show throws everyone around. Jericho is #25 as he's in a weird phase of his career. He wasn't a main event guy anymore but he had feuded with everyone in the midcard already so he just kind of hung around and filled in spots on the card.

All four guys go after Big Show (who has a head like a typewriter according to Tazz) but they can't get him out. Charlie Haas is #26 but gets double teamed by Jericho and Christian. Currently we have Benoit, Angle, Jericho, Christian, Haas, Big Show and Nunzio who is on the floor. Jericho backdrops Christian out for the second year in a row as Billy Gunn is #27. Apparently this is a return for him. It's Fameassers all around and then things slow down again.

John Cena is #28 and that pop is growing at an alarming rate. Show stares him down so Cena throws Nunzio in to kill some time. Nunzio goes after Show for some reason but Cena takes over for him to make it fair. RVD is #29 to a big pop of his own. It's spin kicks all around until things settle down a bit. There's an FU to Angle and Goldberg is #30. The final group: Benoit, Angle, Big Show, Jericho, Nunzio, Haas, Gunn, Cena, RVD and Goldberg. At least the ring didn't fill up until the end so that's not too bad.

Goldie spears a lot of people down to start before Nunzio jumps on his back like an idiot. Haas is put out and Nunzio takes a HUGE spear. Gunn is out as is Nunzio to get us down to seven. Goldberg loads up a Jackhammer on Show but Lesnar runs in with an F5 to break it up. Goldberg stares down Brock, allowing Angle to dump him out. All five remaining

guys not named Big Show go after the one named Big Show but it still doesn't work.

Everyone hits their finishers on Show instead with Cena (Show's feud at the time) hitting the Shuffle instead of the FU, which I'm assuming they were saving for Mania. They try to dead lift Show and realize they screwed up by knocking a giant unconscious. Show shoves them all off and dumps Cena followed by Van Dam a few seconds later.

So it's Big Show, Benoit, Angle and Jericho as the final four. Jericho gets sent to the apron twice and manages to hang on before bulldogging Show down. The Walls go on Show and he taps but Angle breaks the hold up for no apparent reason. Show chokeslams Benoit down but chokeslams Jericho even further, sending him to the floor to get us to three. A side slam puts Angle down and there's another chokeslam to Benoit.

Show breaks up a German attempt from Angle but can't block an Angle Slam. There's a Slam to Benoit (it was a belly to back suplex but whatever) and the ankle lock to Show. Show taps again, but again it doesn't mean anything. The big guy rolls through the hold and eliminates Angle in the process, getting us down to two.

Benoit dropkicks Show but knocks him back into the ring by mistake. A chokeslam is countered into the Crossface and Show taps again, but you know the drill by now. Show shrugs it off and picks Benoit up in a chokeslam. Benoit graps a front chancery though and pulls Show to the apron....then has him teetering on the ropes....AND BENOIT WINS! The crowd kept getting louder as Benoit pulled further and further. Awesome sequence there.

Rating: A. There were some slow spots but this was ALL about Benoit and I can't complain about that at all. The ending sequence here with all three submission guys making Show tap was a cool idea and different than the ending to any other Rumble. They didn't throw a stupid curve here and made Benoit look like a star here, which is exactly what he was supposed to do. Great Rumble.

Overall Rating: B-. The Rumble is really REALLY good but the rest is horrible. Don't watch the rest of the show, but if you're a Benoit fan

and can still sit through a long match of his, this is absolutely required viewing. Things would change a bit more the next year as two REALLY big names would be the stars of the Rumble, but that's not for another year. For now, this was all about Benoit and he nailed it.

Ratings Comparison

Evolution vs. Dudley Boys

Original: C

Redo: D

Rey Mysterio vs. Jamie Noble

Original: N/A

Redo: D+

Chavo Guerrero vs. Eddie Guerrero

Original: C+

Redo: C+

Brock Lesnar vs. Hardcore Holly

Original: D-

Redo: D

HHH vs. Shawn Michaels

Original: C+

Redo: C-

Royal Rumble

Original: A

Redo: A

Overall Rating

Original: C+

Redo: B-

Just as last time, the Rumble is the only thing worth seeing.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/23/royal-rumble-count-up-2004-he-who-must-not-be-named/>

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NXT – January 16, 2014: The Future Is Bright

NXT

Date: January 15, 2014

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Byron Saxton, Tom Phillips, Tensai

It's the first show of the new taping cycle so we're in for some fresh stories. If nothing else we'll get to find out who is Bo's next challenger, possibly at the live NXT special on the WWE Network. The only match for this week is Kofi challenging Alexander Rusev to a rematch

after losing two weeks ago. Let's get to it.

Here's HHH to open things up. As most of us know, there's a new concept called the WWE Network launching on February 24. Also, on February 27, NXT is going to go live for the first time ever. I believe it's just a one time deal though.

Welcome Home.

Adrian Neville vs. Tyler Breeze

Fallout from the lumberjack match a month ago when Breeze cost Neville the title. Tyler grabs a headlock to start but Neville runs him over with a shoulder block to send Tyler to the floor. Neville teases a dive but backflips into the middle of the ring and waits on Breeze. Back in and Neville sends him face first into the buckle, drawing a NOT IN THE FACE chant. Instead Adrian kicks him in the chest, followed up by some loud chops. Neville heads to the apron but gets caught by a springboard dropkick as we take a break.

Back with Tyler holding Neville in a chinlock as Adrian fights up. Tyler takes him down again but stops for a quick photo op. Neville uses the breather to snap off a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker to get himself a breather. A spinning kick to the ribs sets up a running dropkick to the head for two as Breeze is in trouble. Neville loads up a springboard dropkick but Breeze dropkicks him out of the air for two of his own. Good stuff so far.

Prince Pretty is all ticked off now and pounds away on Adrian's face but misses the Beauty Shot. A high kick looks to set up a middle rope Phoenix Splash but Breeze rolls away at the last second. The Beauty Shot is countered into a sitout powerbomb for two as the fans aren't as into this as they should be. Breeze breaks up the Red Arrow by grabbing Adrian's foot and crotching him down, but Neville blocks a hurricanrana attempt, setting up the Red Arrow for the win at 9:20 shown of 12:50.

Rating: B-. I was digging this match as Breeze gets to show that he can go in the ring instead of just on the mic. Neville is a far more complete wrestler than his finisher would suggest. He'll be on the main roster someday in a Sin Cara level role and Breeze could be great as a comedy heel. Good signs for the future here.

CJ Parker vs. Jason Jordan

Jordan, usually a jobber, gets a full entrance. A quick German suplex gets two on Parker and Jordan keeps the grip to hold Parker on the mat. Parker sends him throat first into the ropes and hits the Third Eye (palm strike) for the pin at 1:07. It's a very telling sign when you can get the NXT fans to not care about you at all.

Bo Dallas vs. Mojo Rawley

Non-title. The much bigger Rawley tosses Dallas back into the corner and tells Dallas that he isn't hyped. It works so well that he does it again but Bo offers a nice smile. A shoulder block sends Bo to the floor and the smile is gone. Back in and Bo immediately bails to the floor. Dallas has no idea what to do so he just pounds away on Mojo in the corner. Rawley runs him over again with a shoulder and splashes Dallas in the corner over and over. Dallas rolls to the floor again but Mojo pulls him back inside, only to miss a splash and let Bo roll him up with a handful of trunks for the pin at 3:49.

Rating: C-. Rawley looked like a train here until the very end. I'd have had Bo take the countout as Rawley could easily be a top challenger for the title in the near future. They're also used him far better here instead of having him get destroyed for the entire match before pulling off a fluke win. Also is you have to lose, at least lose to the champion.

Kofi Kingston vs. Alexander Rusev

Feeling out process to start and Kofi can't take him over with a headlock. Some kicks to the ribs have a better effect but Rusev just blasts him in the head to take over. Kofi scores with an elbow to the jaw but gets shoved out of the corner to give Rusev control again. Alexander sends him into the corner and works on the ribs before putting on a nerve hold.

Back up and more shots to the ribs have Kofi in trouble but he sidesteps a charging Bulgarian and sends him to the floor. Kofi misses a baseball slide but scores with a clothesline off the steps as we take a break. We come back with Kofi having a chinlock broken up but managing to avoid a charge. Kofi pounds away in the corner but Rusev counters into a powerbomb for two. The fans chant FEED ME MORE at Rusev before changing over to GOLDBERG.

Rusev drops some elbows and headbutts before going back to the nerve hold. Now the fans start doing the wave as Kofi fights back with chops and a dropkick, only to have his cross body caught in midair. Rusev, still holding Kofi, drives knees into the ribs before trying a Samoan drop but Kofi rolls him up for two. Kingston avoids a charge in the corner and kicks Rusev in the face, but his top rope cross body is caught again, setting up the Samoan drop for two.

Kofi dodges another charge, though this time Rusev puts on the brakes because he actually learns during his matches. The SOS gets two and some hard kicks to the face have Rusev in more trouble. Rusev comes back with a clothesline but Kofi hits his jumping clothesline to take him down again. The Boom Drop connects and after a distraction from Lana, Trouble in Paradise is enough to pin Rusev at 12:09 shown of 15:39.

Rating: C+. While it's not as boring as the fans made it out to be, this was still an uninteresting match for the most part. Rusev losing is questionable as well as the matches here don't mean anything to the main roster so putting Alexander over wouldn't hurt anyone at all. Not bad but nothing inspiring at all.

Overall Rating: B-. Two good matches, a major announcement and nothing bad make for a good episode. The future is incredibly bright for WWE as the class of talent they have down in NXT is very strong. Rusev, Rawley and Neville will all be on the main roster at some point this year and they'll all do well, assuming the creative team doesn't screw them up.

Results

Adrian Neville b. Tyler Breeze – Red Arrow

CJ Parker b. Jason Jordan – Third Eye

Bo Dallas b. Mojo Rawley – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Kofi Kingston b. Alexander Rusev – Trouble in Paradise

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Wrestler of the Day – January 12: Killer Bees

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

The mid 1980s were as good of a period as there has even been for tag team wrestling, which is a shame for the Bees. They were an incredibly talented team that never got a chance on top because there were just too many other great teams ahead of them. As luck would have it, there's a

perfect night to showcase the Bees' talent. On March 15, 1987, there was a one night tag team tournament in Toronto with the winners getting a tag title shot against the Hart Foundation later in the night. We'll be looking at the Bees' matches throughout the evening.

First Round: Kamala/Sika vs. Killer Bees

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

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

That ends though due to the first instance of something I'm sure you'll hear a lot of tonight: heel miscommunication. A hot tag to Brunzell and a quick dropkick gets the win for them. On replay, you can see how awesome that one was. He kicked Sika right in the freaking face.

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

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

Bundy says that they should just get the titles now. Thanks

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

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

Finals: Killer Bees vs. Demolition

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

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

Tag Titles: Killer Bees vs. Hart Foundation

Well ok then. Apparently this is the reward for the win. Better than nothing I guess. The Harts try to walk off since

the Bees are wearing their masks but they're declared legal. This should be a good match if nothing else. The masks are removed and we stall some more. Apparently the match has been signed already. That's impressive since the other match ended like 8 minutes ago. Those are some fast lawyers.

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

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

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

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

Team Hart Foundation vs. Team Strike Force

Hart Foundation, Bolsheviks, Demolition, Dream Team, Islanders

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

The rules here are that if one member of a team is eliminated, both

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

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

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

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

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

Roma tags in Powers who gets beaten down just as fast as Roma did, so it's off to Jacques again. Not that it matters much as Jacques misses a

cross body and Smash gets a quick pin. That's good as we're now down to sixteen guys left in the match. Off to Dynamite vs. Tama but Powers comes in, only to hesitate and gets his head taken off by a clothesline. Neidhart comes in and puts him in an over the shoulder powerbomb position as Haku drops a double ax (is there a single ax?) to the chest.

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

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

Rick gets away enough to bring in Santana who hits the forearm almost immediately for two. The saving shot to the back of Santana's head by Bret is enough for Neidhart to get a pin and eliminate the champions. To recap, we have the Harts, the Dream Team and the Islanders vs. the Bulldogs, the Stallions and the Bees. At least now things can slow down a lot. Haku hits a HIGH dropkick on Powers as Jesse talks about his great great grandfather coming over on the Mayflower.

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

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

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

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

The Bees double team Anvil in a match that by their own words probably happened 300 times over the years. Brunzell hits a high knee to the face for two and it's off to Bret who does about as well. Tama comes in and takes out Roma and it's off to Haku. Haku misses a legdrop and it's back to Brunzell. Brunzell hiptosses him into the heel corner for some reason and Bret comes back in. Roma gets two off a middle rope fist but Hart comes right back with a belly to back suplex.

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

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

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

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

As I said, the Bees were one of the best teams to never hold the tag titles. They just came up at the wrong time and didn't have a chance with teams like the Bulldogs, the Harts, Demolition and Strike Force out there getting all of the glory. Still though, they were very exciting to watch and could put on clinics with anyone. Also here's a bit of trivia for you: Blair faced Hulk Hogan in Hogan's first ever professional match.

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

Monday Nitro #151

Date: August 24, 1998

Location: United Center, Chicago, Illinois

Attendance: 17,094

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

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

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

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

Opening sequence.

Mike Enos vs. Wrath

Enos fires in some knees in the corner but Wrath shrugs them off and

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

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

The Nitro Girls dance in the crowd.

Nitro Party winner.

Kaz Hayashi vs. Dean Malenko

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

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

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

Video on the Wolfpack.

Here's the Wolfpack minus Sting with something to say. After the catchphrases, Nash talks about Hogan running his mouth week in and week out, even though he can't run with them. Nash says if Hogan wants a war,

he's got one. He talks about coming here for a war two years ago and his goal is to run the company. If he has to run off Hogan and Bischoff and become world champion to do it, then that's what he'll do. That brings him to Goldberg who has speared him twice in a row now.

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

Konnan vs. Jim Neidhart

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

Tony brings out Stevie Ray for a chat about the Black and White surrounding him at the end of Thunder. Stevie won't comment on what they were saying to him but he'll deal with the Giant in due time. As for the TV Title, Stevie is coming for Jericho soon but here's an angry Booker T for his return. Booker says he's been out of the country healing so he could come back and give the fans 110%. He can't even leave his house to get his paper without people asking him about Stevie Ray.

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

Nitro Girls.

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

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

Hour #2 begins.

Steve McMichael vs. Riggs

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

We hit the chinlock on Mongo who slaps the mat like he's tapping but the referee says nothing. McMichael fights up but a knee to the ribs drops him again. Riggs mocks the Horsemen sign and avoids an elbow as Mongo can't get anything going. A boot in the corner stops a charging Riggs and it's a pair of three point tackles and the tombstone to give Mongo the win. Those were the only major offensive moves he hit all match.

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

Post match Horace blasts Mongo in the head with the stop sign and the beating is on until Malenko makes the save. Saturn comes out as well but

is quickly sent back outside, leaving Mongo and Malenko to hold up the Horsemen sign.

More Nitro Girls, this time in leather.

Scott Norton vs. Rick Fuller

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

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

Lex Luger vs. Brian Adams

They finally lock up after about a minute of stalling before taking their time with some lockups. Luger grabs a headlock as Heenan defends Bischoff for reasons of general weaseliness. Luger sends Adams to the floor with some posing as the stalling continues. Back in and Luger hiptosses Adams down but a Vincent distraction lets Brian get in a right hand to take over. Luger is kicked to the floor and sent into the steps for two before it's off to a headscissor choke from Adams.

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

Rating: D+. Slightly better than the previous match but that's mainly because the fans were more into the hometown Luger. The match was again

close to a squash until the comeback at the end which doesn't make for the most interesting match in the world. Adams getting this high of a spot on the card continues to astound me.

More clips of Warrior from last week.

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

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

Hour #3 begins.

TV Title: Chris Jericho vs. Curt Hennig

Jericho is defending and takes over a minute to get down the aisle due to jawing with fans about their signs. He takes one away and kicks it, falling flat on his face in a funny moment. Feeling out process to start with Hennig grabbing the hair and stopping a takedown attempt. Curt: "Two points!" They jockey for position until Hennig goes to the ropes for a breather.

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

Curt takes out the knee to send Jericho outside for even more chops, only to have Jericho take him back inside to kick at Hennig's legs. A springboard dropkick sends Hennig outside and a middle rope version of

the same move drops Curt inside. Hennig misses a dropkick and gets caught in the Liontamer but Hennig is right next to the ropes. The PerfectPlex is countered into a small package for two and they slug it out as the time limit expires at....6:10? At least make it close people.

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

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

More Nitro Girls.

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

US Title: Bret Hart vs. Booker T

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

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

Hollywood Hogan/The Giant vs. Goldberg/Kevin Nash

After about five minutes of entrances, we finally get down to Nash vs.

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

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

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

Luger and Konnan come out to even the odds until Goldberg and Hennig are the only ones left. Goldberg spears him down and Jackhammers him for the pin as this turns into an ECW show for a few seconds. Nash accidentally knees Goldberg in the face and Giant sends him to the floor as Warrior, Page and Piper come out to clean house and stand tall. Goldberg and Nash have a staredown to end the show.

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

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

Royal Rumble 2003

Date: January 19, 2003

Location: Fleet Center, Boston, Massachusetts

Attendance: 15,338

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

To say a lot has changed in the last year is a huge understatement. We have the Brand Split now and there are two world titles. That brings us to the part of this show that is most remembered: the world title matches. We have HHH defending the Raw Title in one of the worst matches ever, followed by Angle defending the Smackdown Title in one of the best matches ever. Also Brock Lesnar is here and has taken Smackdown by storm. Let's get to it.

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

Big Show vs. Brock Lesnar

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

Show shoves him around to start so Brock snaps off a belly to belly suplex to fire up the crowd.

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

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

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

Jericho says he'll win the Rumble.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nathan Jones is coming. Oh geez.

We recap the Torrie vs. Dawn feud. This is one of those stories where you look at it in awe and wonder what they were thinking. Dawn Marie (a gorgeous Diva) fell in love with and married Torrie's fifty something year old dad Al Wilson, then screwed him to death (literally) on their honeymoon. There was some lesbianism (as in kissing on screen and unfilmed other stuff) involved which was there to tease the audience and wasn't bad at all. This is supposed to be a stepmother vs. stepdaughter match. Again, I have no idea what this was supposed to accomplish.

Dawn Marie vs. Torrie Wilson

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

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

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

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

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

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

We recap HHH vs. Scott Steiner as I begin to take deep breaths. HHH was giving a promo about how awesome he was when Steiner interrupted and demanded a title shot. This led to a series of contests like pushups and bench presses which went nowhere. Note that Steiner hadn't actually had a match in WWE up to this point. I wonder why.

Raw World Title: HHH vs. Scott Steiner

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

Steiner suplexes him back in for two and works on the back some more. An elbow to the face puts HHH down and there's an appropriate Boston Crab. HHH powers out of it and hits the facebuster but Steiner no sells it.

There's a bear hug which is quickly broken but Steiner snaps off an overhead belly to belly (1) for two. Flair saves HHH from being put in the Steiner Recliner and Steiner charges into a boot in the corner to finally change the momentum.

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

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

HHH is loudly calling spots to try to salvage this before he hits a vertical suplex. For no apparent reason he goes up and jumps into a belly to belly (3). Steiner can barely punch so he settles for some clotheslines. There's an overhead belly to belly (4) and an overhead belly to belly (5) and an overhead belly to belly (6). The fans are openly booing Steiner now. His response? To hold HHH's hair while HHH rams his own head into the buckles (seriously, Steiner clearly isn't even pushing) and to hit a spinning belly to belly (7) for two and even more booing.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We recap Benoit vs. Angle. Angle won the title from Big Show at Armageddon thanks to Lesnar before revealing that he hired Paul Heyman to

be his new manager. Heyman said anyone could get a shot other than Brock Lesnar and brought in Team Angle (Haas and Benjamin) to protect Kurt during a knee injury. Benoit won a title shot over Big Show to set this up.

Smackdown World Title: Chris Benoit vs. Kurt Angle

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

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

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

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

immediately cover.

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

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

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

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

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

Royal Rumble

The intervals are two minutes if you listen to Fink and 90 seconds if you listen to JR. There are fifteen Raw guys and fifteen Smackdown guys this year which would be the norm for a few years to come. Shawn gets #1 and

Jericho gets #2, but it's Christian playing the role of Jericho at the entrance, allowing Jericho to sneak in from behind and jump Shawn. Jericho hits Shawn low and starts the beat down before getting a chair to crack Shawn open.

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

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

The Bronco Buster hits Nowitski and Chavo is #7. He immediately takes Rey down but gets caught in a 619. Rey drops the dime on Chavo and hits a 619 on Christian. He tries a springboard rana on Christian but lands on Nowitski and takes him to the floor in the process. Jericho puts Mysterio out, leaving us with Jericho, Edge, Christian and Chavo at the moment. You can add Tajiri at #8 to that list.

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

There are too many people in the ring at the moment. Edge gets in some kendo stick shots on DeMott for an elimination. Christian and Jericho hit

Dreamer with trashcan lids in a modified Conchairto for another elimination. Tajiri elbows both guys down but tries the Tarantula on Jericho and gets dumped as a result. B2, as in Bull Buchanan as Cena's ex-lackey, is #11. Edge knocks out Chavo as the ring is thinning out nicely.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Taker punches everyone and dumps Cena and Jamal with ease. Maven

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

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

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

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

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

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

than Benoit vs. Angle of course. HHH vs. Steiner is only worth seeing if you want to see a trainwreck.

Ratings Comparison

Big Show vs. Brock Lesnar

Original: D

Redo: C+

Dudley Boys vs. William Regal/Lance Storm

Original: C

Redo: D

Torrie Wilson vs. Dawn Marie

Original: DD

Redo: D-

Scott Steiner vs. HHH

Original: G-

Redo: H (As in HHH)

Chris Benoit vs. Kurt Angle

Original: A+

Redo: A+

Royal Rumble

Original: B

Redo: B-

Overall Rating

Original: B-

Redo: C-

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

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

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

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Wrestler of the Day – January 11: Abdullah the Butcher

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

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

around the world, as Abdullah has been everywhere other than the WWF.

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

Mark Lewin vs. Abdullah the Butcher

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

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

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

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

Abdullah the Butcher vs. Hulk Hogan

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

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

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

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

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

Andre the Giant vs. Abdullah the Butcher

Andre easily knocks him out to the floor with ease before bringing him

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

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

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

Zeus vs. Abdulllah the Butcher

In case you've never heard of him, Zeus was an actor that was brought in as a monster heel against Hogan, only for everyone to realize that he's an actor, meaning he can't wrestle. It's a brawl on the floor to start as the fans are INSANE for this match. Zeus mauls the Butcher on the floor before the bell and poses in the ring but that just warms Abdulllah up. We go inside with Butcher, apparently a crowd favorite here, staring at Zeus as trash is thrown into the ring.

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

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

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

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

We'll close things out with one of only three matches from Butcher's most famous run in America. It's the Chamber of Horrors match at Halloween Havoc 1991, which is a huge team match but when else am I going to get to talk about this?

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

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

even dumber than it sounds.

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

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

People in masks pop out of those caskets. They don't do anything but they pop out anyway. Sting clotheslines Vader to the floor and Gigante pulls Studd off of the cage wall. The Steiners hit their top rope DDT on Cactus as the chair is lowered. Vader knocks Rick into the chair but Rick clotheslines his way out of it. Sting throws a casket lid up in the air so it lands on Cactus' head.

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

It's pretty much impossible to call this match as everything is all over the place and it's just random brawling. Sting is busted open, as is Abdullah. Cactus goes for the switch as Rick is put in the chair, but the future Freakzilla makes the save. The heels get Rick into the chair for a

second but he fights out of it pretty quickly. He gets put in there again and Cactus goes for the switch. Steiner suplexes Abdullah into the chair instead and after Cactus takes FOREVER to stand next to the switch, he throws the lever and Abdullah gets “electrocuted.”

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

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

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

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Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2002: The Rumble Game

Royal Rumble 2002

Date: January 20, 2002

Location: Phillips Arena, Atlanta, Georgia

Attendance: 12,915

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

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

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

Tag Titles: Spike Dudley/Tazz vs. Dudley Boys

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

Bubba shouts at Spike to get up as we get a very nice shot of Stacy. Tazz is back on the apron as D-Von hits a Hennig necksnap of all things. Bubba

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

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

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

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

Intercontinental Title: Edge vs. William Regal

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

Regal comes back with a clothesline but Edge kicks him in the back to put both guys down. Being the British dude that he is, Regal suplexes Edge down for two. Make that four. Uh six. Yet somehow that isn't three. Off to an arm trap chinlock followed by a hard forearm to put the champion

down again. A double arm powerbomb hits Edge for two and they head to the apron. Edge busts out a DDT onto said apron, further injuring Regal's nose.

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

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

Women's Title: Trish Stratus vs. Jazz

Jacqueline is referee for absolutely no apparent reason and Trish is defending. Jazz is basically being a bully and has injured Trish's hand coming into this. Jazz jumps Trish to start but misses a splash, giving Trish two off a rollup. A modified hot shot slows the champ down again and a legdrop gets two. Jazz works on the bad hand for a bit but Jackie pulls them out of the ropes. Jackie of course makes it all about herself and won't count a cover on Trish. Stratusfaction hits out of nowhere for two and Jazz is up a few seconds later, basically no selling it. Trish hits a bad looking running bulldog to retain.

Rating: D. It was short, it was sloppy, the ending was stupid and Jackie was in it. What other kind of grade do you expect here? Stratus was starting to get better but it would take another year and Lita before she

got amazing. Jazz was a pretty stupid pick to bring over to WWE as no one remembered her and she didn't have the looks to back up any lack of hype. Bad match here.

Flair says he'll win.

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

Ric Flair vs. Vince McMahon

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

There's a trashcan shot to the head and Flair is busted open. How thin must the skin on his forehead be? Anyway, Vince steals a camera from someone to take a picture of Flair's cut before we head back inside. Since he's a jerk, Vince starts working over the knee in (less skilled) Flair fashion. The leg is wrapped around the post and Vince puts on a Figure Four that Dusty Rhodes would be jealous of.

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

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

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

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

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

WWF World Title: The Rock vs. Chris Jericho

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

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

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

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

The jumping clothesline takes the referee down by mistake, allowing Jericho to blast Rock with the belt. Another referee slides in and gets two off that and Rock DDTs Jericho down. Rock covers...and Nick Patrick won't count. There's a Rock Bottom for his efforts and a People's Elbow for Jericho but there's no referee. Rock checks on Hebner, allowing Jericho to hit him low, send him into the Chekov's Gun in the shape of an exposed turnbuckle. All that plus a rollup with his feet on the ropes is enough for Jericho to retain the title.

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

heel. Good stuff here and a very fine title match.

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

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

Royal Rumble

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

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

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

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

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

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

Taker punches Scotty down and throws Maven back in to eliminate him, which under old Rumble rules would count. The beating goes into the crowd as there's nothing in the ring at the moment. Christian is #13 but has no one to fight because Scotty is still down. Instead we go to the back where Maven is rammed face first into a popcorn machine. Taker eats a handful of popcorn and finally leaves Maven alone.

Scotty gets in and walks into a DDT as DDP is #14. Nothing of note continues to happen until Scotty superkicks Page through the ropes to the floor and hits the Worm on Christian. Page sneaks back in and throws Scotty out as Chuck is #15. They all beat on each other for a bit with Christian and Chuck teaming up for a bit. Godfather, now the owner of an

escort service in an attempt to salvage the gimmick, is #16 and brings out 12 good looking women with him. Page is eliminated off camera during this.

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

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

Speaking of entertaining the crowd, HHH is #22. The entrance takes about a minute and a half, they stare at each other for about twenty more seconds, and the slugout only lasts for a few seconds until Hurricane is #23. Luckily for him, the legends knock each other down so Hurricane can try a double chokeslam. The look on Austin's face is hilarious as the two of them dump Hurricane with ease.

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

#26, drawing the rare double chant of YOU SUCK WHAT.

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

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

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

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

Angle accidentally clothesline Hennig but doesn't eliminate him. There's the PerfectPlex (BIG pop for that) to Kurt but HHH dumps Perfect a second later. Angle and HHH stare each other down and the Game pounds away on

him to take over. Kurt gets HHH to the apron but can't get the win. HHH chokes away but charges into a backdrop, sending him to the apron. Kurt makes the classic mistake of not making sure the other guy is out and gets clotheslined to the floor, giving HHH the Rumble. For you trivia guys, this is the longest Rumble ever to date, even going 11 seconds longer than the 40 man version.

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

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

Ratings Comparison

Spike Dudley/Tazz vs. Billy and Chuck

Original: C-

Redo: D+

William Regal vs. Edge

Original: C-

Redo: D+

Trish Stratus vs. Jazz

Original: D+

Redo: D

Ric Flair vs. Vince McMahon

Original: D+

Redo: C+

Chris Jericho vs. The Rock

Original: B+

Redo: B

Royal Rumble

Original: C-

Redo: C+

Overall Rating

Original: B-

Redo: B-

Yep, about the same for the most part here.

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

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

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Royal Rumble Count Up – 2001: Austin X3

Royal Rumble 2001

Date: January 21, 2001

Location: New Orleans Arena, New Orleans, Louisiana

Attendance: 16,056

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

Austin is back and that's by far the biggest change from last year. He's been on a warpath after Rikishi and I think HHH for running him down last year. Other than that there isn't much going on in the Rumble. We also have HHH defending against Angle and Jericho vs. Benoit with twenty minutes and a ladder. I think we'll have another solid show here. Let's get to it.

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

Tag Titles: Edge and Christian vs. Dudley Boys

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

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

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

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

Rating: B. This is one of those annoying matches where it's really good and therefore there's nothing to make fun of. These guys had some of the best tag matches the WWF has ever seen and this was no exception, with all four guys looking great out there. Notice something about Edge and Christian and the Hardys: they came from tag teams but they were allowed to grow up in said tag teams, meaning once they made the transition to singles matches they had a far easier time. That NEVER happens today which is why tag teams don't make good singles wrestlers anymore. The crowd is white hot tonight too.

Drew Carey is here. He's promoting an improv comedy PPV and somehow got

in the WWE HOF out of it.

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

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

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

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

Intercontinental Title: Chris Benoit vs. Chris Jericho

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

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

Back in and Benoit loads up a ladder in the corner before ramming Jericho face first into it. Jericho gets up and puts the ladder in the corner

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

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

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

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

Rating: A+. Take two Canadians, give them a ladder and 19 minutes and this is what you should expect. These two beat on each other HARD and the match was excellent as a result. They came up with some new stuff while mixing in basic stuff like HIT THE GUY IN THE FACE WITH A LADDER but it was so intense that it became a classic. Check this one out.

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

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

Jericho says he proved Benoit wrong.

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

Women's Title: Chyna vs. Ivory

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

HHH breathes a lot.

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

WWF World Title: HHH vs. Kurt Angle

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

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

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

Off to an inverted Indian Deathlock because we can't quite reach the 80s yet. The facebuster gets two for HHH and it's time for a bad looking Figure Four, although at least it's on the correct leg. Trish interferes to try to break it up and we get a catfight on the Spanish announce

table. Vince comes down to break it up as we completely stop watching the match. Vince carries Trish away but Stephanie pulls her off her dad's shoulder. We haven't seen anything in the ring for about two minutes now.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rock talks about how the Rumble is like a big bowl of jambalaya. As for Kane and Undertaker possibly being together, he doesn't really care if they want to give each other a box of chocolates or kick each others' faces in, because Rocky is throwing them both out. It could come down to

Rock vs. Bull Buchanan, Rock vs. Perry Saturn, or Rock vs. Steve Austin, but either way he's going to Wrestlemania. Rocky was feeling it here.

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

Royal Rumble

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

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

Drew is the only one left standing and the crowd seems amused. Then Kane is #6. JR: "Oh my God oh my God oh my God." Drew begs the Hardys to get back in as Kane stalks him. After about a minute, Kane gets in and Drew offers a handshake and then cash. Kane grabs Drew by the throat until Raven is #7. Drew wisely eliminates himself, high fives some fans and bails. This was perfectly fine as he was in there like 3 minutes and gave us a decently funny moment. Also he seemed to enjoy being there which is more than I can say for most celebrities. Good stuff.

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

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

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

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

Rock and Kane slug it out for a bit until Rock hits a Samoan Drop. Both guys are down until Bradshaw is #16. He's cool with fighting both guys and hits the Clothesline on Rock. Rock comes back with the spinebuster but Kane clotheslines Rock down to take over again. Albert is #17 to keep up the size and power trend. Albert and Bradshaw pair off as do the other two guys but we can't get an elimination.

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

Rock powerslams Kwik down and William Regal is #21. He also beats up Kwik who isn't having a good night so far. Nothing of note happens again until

Test is #22. He immediately knocks out Regal before pounding away on Albert. Big Show makes his return from a trip to OVW to try (and fail) to lose weight. He clotheslines Test out and dumps Kwik as well. Everyone not named Rock gets chokeslammed as Rock kicks Show low and eliminates him for the second year in a row.

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

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

Rikishi gets in a fight with Austin on the floor and everyone is in the ring now. Austin dumps Haku as Taker ERUPTS on Rikishi. A chokeslam puts Rikishi down but a pair of headbutts go badly for the Dead Man. Rikishi superkicks Undertaker out in a pretty big upset. As impressive as that was for him, he tries the Banzai Drop on Rock and deserves the elimination he gets.

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

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

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

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

Ratings Comparison

Dudley Boys vs. Edge and Christian

Original: B-

Redo: B

Chris Jericho vs. Chris Benoit

Original: A

Redo: A+

Ivory vs. Chyna

Original: N/A

Redo: D

Kurt Angle vs. HHH

Original: B

Redo: B

Royal Rumble

Original: B

Redo: B+

Overall Rating

Original: A

Redo: A

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

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

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Jay Bradley and Wes Brisco Gone From TNA

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