

# Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2011: That Stupid Cobra

## Royal Rumble 2011

Date: January 30, 2011

Location: TD Garden, Boston, Massachusetts

Attendance: 15,113

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, Matt Striker

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

The opening video is exactly what you would expect.

## Smackdown World Title: Edge vs. Dolph Ziggler

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

As they come back in, Ziggler grabs a neckbreaker for two and hits an elbow to the chest. Off to a chinlock as Dolph stays on the neck. The fans cheer for Edge of course and he fights up, only to get caught in a middle rope sunset flip. Edge comes back with a slingshot into the buckle and now Dolph is in trouble. A rollup out of the corner gets two for Edge but Dolph hits another neckbreaker for two of his own.

Off to the chinlock until Edge rolls out to the apron. Ziggler knocks him into the barricade and it's back inside for the chinlock. Edge fights up

but they both try cross bodies to put both guys down. Ziggy misses a Stinger Splash in the corner and Edge catches him in a flapjack to put both guys down again. Edge counters the Fameasser into a sitout powerbomb for two more but he can't follow up.

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

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

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

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

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

Miz says he'll win.

## Raw World Title: The Miz vs. Randy Orton

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

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

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

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

Riley breaks up something like a powerbomb, allowing Miz to hit a modified Reality Check for two. Both finishers are countered and Orton hits an Angle Slam of all things for two. I vaguely remember him using

that around this time. Miz's attempt at walking out fails but he gets in something we can't see for two back inside.

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

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

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

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

Divas Title: Natalya vs. Laycool

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

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

Nattie is defending as I said and this is one fall to a finish. Laycool goes after both other chicks to start and Eve gets double teamed. Natalya comes back with a slingshot to send Layla into Michelle as Matt actually tries to analyze this match. We get down to Laycool squaring off but before they do anything, Eve and Nattie come back in.

Layla breaks up the Sharpshooter on Eve so Natalya puts the Sharpshooter on BOTH OF THEM AT ONCE. Layla hits the neckbreaker on Eve to send her to

the floor but Michelle kicks Eve out to the floor. Michelle misses a bit boot and takes Layla's head off by mistake. She and the champ fight to the floor, allowing Eve to sneak in and steal the pin with a moonsault.

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

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

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

Rumble By The Numbers time!

40 entrants

1 winner

24 winners

656 losing entrants

39 eliminations by Shawn, a record

26 WWE Hall of Famers who have competed

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

2 women who have competed in the Rumble

11 eliminations by Kane in 2001, a record

13 straight Rumbles for Kane, also a record

62:12 Mysterio lasted in the 2006 Rumble

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

3 wins by Austin

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

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

### Royal Rumble

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

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

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

Ted DiBiase is #6 along with Maryse. Bryan rips off kicks to Regal before trying to dump Ted out. John Morrison is #7 to a BIG pop. He comes in (after slipping) with a slingshot kick to Regal and the Flying Chuck to Punk. A C4 takes Bryan down but DiBiase dumps Morrison to the apron. As Regal is eliminated, we get at the time the best Rumble save ever, as Morrison is knocked from the apron but catches himself on the barricade.

His feet never touch as he pulls himself up to the barricade, tightrope walks down to the steps, jumps to said steps, kicks Regal in the head, and gets back in. That blew my mind live.

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

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

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

Instead it's R-Truth at #18 and it's the same result. The only highlight is Punk hitting the knee in the corner and saying WHAT'S UP with a big goofy grin on his face. There goes Truth but Great Khali returns at #19 to scare Punk half to death. He fights all of the Nexus off and manages to dump Harris which is a big breakthrough. Khali chops Punk down and Mason Ryan, also of the Nexus, is #20. After a brief slugout he puts Khali out and we're right back where we were.

In our second major return of the Rumble, Booker T is #21 and Striker FREAKS. Booker fires off as many kicks as he can and hits the Bookend on

McGillicutty. You know we're getting the Spinarooni but Ryan throws Booker out as soon as it's over. Punk: "WE'RE GOING TO WRESTLEMANIA!" All hope seems to be lost but heeeeeeeeeere's Cena at #22. The hometown boy charges at the ring and puts out McGillicutty, Ryan and Otunga to get us down to one on one.

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

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

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

Mysterio is #29 and he hits a pair of headscissors on Swagger and Sheamus but Sheamus breaks up the 619. Trouble in Paradise takes Sheamus down but Swagger takes Kofi down. Rey hits a headscissors to put Swagger on the apron and a 619 gets the elimination. Wade Barrett is #30 and it turns into a bunch of mini brawls. Winds of Change take Cena down and Zigler is #31. There's a pretty big talent pool in there at the moment with Cena, Mysterio, Sheamus, Kingston, Zigler and Barrett.



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

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

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

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

Striker tells us that Riley has been eliminated five minutes after it happens. Not only is he annoying but he's a bad broadcaster on top of that. Alberto wisely takes forever to get into the ring as Miz's voice sounds really hoarse. By long enough I mean Orton jumps him in the aisle at #39. There's a quick RKO to Del Rio and one for Sheamus as well. A

third hits Kofi and he's gone. Sheamus is out too and it's time for Cena vs. Orton. John points to the sign but Kane's pyro goes off at #40 to complete the field and scare Cena to death.

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

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

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

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

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

**Overall Rating:** A. The worst and only bad match was the Divas and you have looks in that one so how can this be anything below great? 2011 was the start of the good period for WWE and they kicked it off with a bang

with a great Rumble here. This is an excellent show and well worth checking out. Good stuff here.

### Ratings Comparison

Edge vs. Dolph Ziggler

Original: A-

Redo: A-

Miz vs. Randy Orton

Original: B

Redo: B

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

Original: D

Redo: D+

Royal Rumble

Original: A

Redo: A

Overall Rating

Original: A

Redo: A

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

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

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

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# Main Event – January 18, 2018: More Than I Can Ask For

## Main Event

Date: January 18, 2018

Location: AT&T Center, San Antonio, Texas

Commentators: Vic Joseph, Nigel McGuinness

It's effectively the go home week for the Royal Rumble as next week is the big 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Monday Night Raw. Smackdown could still offer a few changes, but at this point there isn't much more to be done aside from adding a few names to the Rumble matches. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

## Curt Hawkins vs. Rhyno

Rhyno runs him over with a shoulder to start and does it again with a clothesline but Hawkins...lays down. He knows he's going to lose anyway so let's just get it out of the way. That's a trick of course and the small

package only gets two. The chase goes a bit better for Hawkins as he stomps away, only to have the chinlock fail him. A TKO gives Rhino a breather but Hawkins is right back with a clothesline of his own for two. Hawkins charges straight into a spinebuster though and the losing streak continues at 5:33.

**Rating:** D. This is the latest Rhino vs. Hawkins match. Hawkins might not be anything great but his intros are funny and it could be a nice plot development for someone to lose to him. Either that or he loses to the Brooklyn Brawler on Monday and rage quits, which would be amusing enough as well.

We look at Braun Strowman ripping the set down to crush Brock Lesnar and Kane.

We see all of Strowman's rampage from Raw, packed into one set of videos. He was fired, then he beat people up, then he flipped over a production truck, then he launched Michael Cole off a stage, then Stephanie McMahon solved everything in ten seconds.

Royal Rumble card rundown.

We look at Tuesday's semifinal matches in the US Title Tournament.

From Smackdown.

US Title: Bobby Roode vs. Jinder Mahal

The title is vacant coming in, Roode's ribs are banged up, there are no Singh Brothers and Shane McMahon/Daniel Bryan are at ringside. Feeling out process to start with Mahal's cheap shot to the ribs being cut off. They head outside with Mahal driving the bad ribs into the barricade and getting in a few more shots as we take a break.

Back with Mahal bending the ribs around the post and then slapping on an abdominal stretch (take notes Mojo). Some knees to the ribs keep Roode down and Mahal puts a knee in the back. You can't fault the psychology here but you can fault the fans being dead bored after this lame show.

Roode gets two off a sunset flip but a superkick gives Mahal the same to

keep him in control. Bobby finally sends him outside for a clothesline from the apron as the crowd is just gone here. Back in and Mahal rolls through a high crossbody for two of his own, followed by a Blockbuster for the same. Roode's spinebuster plants Mahal again and the Khallas is reversed into the Glorious DDT to make Roode the champion at 15:44.

**Rating:** C. This was as exciting as Mahal working the ribs for about thirteen minutes was going to be. Roode winning was the only way they could go here with the story they were telling though and it's nice to see Mahal fall further down the card. This win gives Roode a big marquee thing on his resume, though you can probably pencil him in for a defense against Ziggler at the Rumble. The match was watchable, but they had killed the show a long time before.

The bosses present Roode with the title to end the show.

#### TJP vs. Mustafa Ali

We start fast with an exchange of takedowns and reversals with TJP countering everything to very little avail. Ali misses a big kick and TJP nips up, only to be taken back down with a springboard armdrag. A spinwheel kick (good one too) drops TJP for two but he sends Ali into the corner and goes with the simple stomping. Ali is sent into the barricade and we take a break.

Back with Ali coming back with a few headbutts and the rolling X Factor for two. Ali puts him on top but gets missile dropkicked in the knee for a clever counter. The kneebar goes on in the middle of the ring but Ali makes the rope to fulfill the kneebar requirements. TJP charges into the post though and gets rolled up for the pin at 8:47.

**Rating:** C. This was better than I was expecting with both guys working hard and putting on a decent match when no one was going to be paying attention to it in the first place. Ali is another guy who can do a lot of good things in the ring and TJP is a talented guy, though I'm really not sold on the current losing streak deal.

Goldberg Hall of Fame announcement.

From Raw.

### Finn Balor vs. Seth Rollins

Jordan, Gallows and Anderson are at ringside. Balor armbars him to start but gets armdragged away, followed by a kick to the back. Seth gets sent outside though and a kick to the chest puts him down as we take a break. Back (after a Raw moment of the 1-2-3 Kid pinning Razor Ramon in a huge upset) with Rollins hitting the Blockbuster but hurting his knee. It's fine enough to try the suicide dive though and Balor is down again.

They get back inside with Rolling hitting a forearm to the back but having Balor slip out of the Falcon Arrow. The Sling Blade takes Rollins down, only to have Seth come back with his own. Balor gets in another Sling Blade but charges into a superkick for two. I really wouldn't emphasize how they both use the same move like that but have it their way. The Wind-Up knee is countered with a forearm so Rollins enziguris him down. Seth has to roll through the Phoenix splash and gets caught with the shotgun dropkick in the corner.

The Coup de Grace is broken up with the superplex into the Falcon Arrow for two more and both guys are down. Seth's frog splash hits the knees though and Balor rolls him up for...two apparently but here's the Bar to interrupt. The brawl is on at ringside with Anderson and Gallows fighting the Bar until Balor hits a flip dive to take all four out. Another kick to the head sets up the Coup de Grace but Rollins rolls away. Cesaro's distraction allows Jordan to trip Balor and Rollins hits the curb stomp (WHERE IN THE WORLD HAS THAT BEEN???) for the pin at 15:18.

**Rating:** C+. Seth's eternally present knee selling issues aside, this was the kind of main event match that always works. They were pushing the idea of the messed up fall quite a bit here and that leads me to think we're heading for a rematch. I'm really not sure about the idea of Balor losing so soon after his renewed push but that's WWE for you.

**Overall Rating:** C+. The stuff from the week's show was good and felt eventful while the original matches weren't bad at all. As usual, this show is up and down every single week and it's really a guess about whether or not the show is going to be good. At least there was something

this time though and that's more than you get most of the time.

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# Smackdown – August 21, 2003: There's Your TV-MA

## **Smackdown**

Date: August 21, 2003

Location: Joe Louis Arena, Detroit, Michigan

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

It's the go home show for Summerslam and by definition this show has to be better than Raw. I mean it's not possible for it to be worse than the drek that they aired on Monday. Brock Lesnar vs. Kurt Angle for the Smackdown World Title is pretty much the only good looking match on Sunday's card so hopefully they can increase that to two matches tonight. Let's get to it.

This one is TV-MA, which the WWE Network tells me three times in the first thirty seconds. What in the world do they have on here? This week's Raw had implied rape, sexual slavery and cruelty to animals. What's this



going to have? The Young Bucks vs. New Jack?

We open with a long recap of Vince McMahon joining forces with Brock to screw over Angle. You know, because Angle vs. Lesnar just wasn't good enough for Summerslam after being good enough for Wrestlemania.

Opening sequence.

Here's Angle to open things up and I know it's brought up a lot, but he just looks cool in that track suit look with the title. Angle yells at Brock for running to Vince McMahon for help because Kurt isn't someone who needs a 58 year old to fight his battles for him. Tonight, Angle is coming to find Lesnar and give him the beating that he deserves. He can win the match on Sunday because tonight is about a fight. He'll fight Lesnar or Vince or even both at the same time because he just wants a fight against someone.

This brings out Vince to say that he can't give Kurt what he wants tonight. See, tonight is about what Vince wants so Angle won't be having a fight. If Angle lays a hand on either Vince or Brock tonight, he's suspended and no longer champion. Instead, Angle can have a match with Big Show. This brings out Show and Angle is willing to fight him now, meaning the brawl is on in the aisle. Kurt easily kicks him low and gets in a belt shot until referees pull him off. This was a bit shorter than some recent opening segments and while it set up a match that we've covered enough, Angle showed some great fire.

Post match Show freaks out in the back and Vince tells him that the main event is now a falls count anywhere street fight.

### Rey Mysterio vs. Matt Hardy

Non-title because...you know the reasons by now. Therefore, Matt, who has never lost his cell phone and has hipper pants than Rey, can't win the title. Hardy wastes no time in taking him down for some early two counts, only to have Rey come back with a springboard headscissors. Billy Kidman has to intercept a cheating Shannon Moore but the distraction lets Matt get in a thumb to the eye. That doesn't stop Rey from hitting a corkscrew dive to the floor but a springboard is broken up with a hard forearm.

Shannon misses a chair shot but Kidman is accused instead, earning him an ejection.

Back from a break with Rey being posted and an elbow drop getting two. A Side Effect plants Rey for two but he comes right back with a spinning DDT to put both guys down. The springboard seated senton gets two but Matt grabs a reverse Side Effect (that's not a bad finisher) for two of his own. Rey's moonsault press gives him two of his own but a Shannon distraction saves Matt from the 619. Cue Zach Gowen to cane Matt in the back, setting up the 619. West Coast Pop gives Rey the pin.

**Rating:** B. As usual, these two were working out there and if you give Rey an opponent who can keep up with him, you're going to get a solid performance. I like the idea of Rey fighting off both guys and winning in the end, but setting up Matt vs. Gowen on Sunday when the Cruiserweight Champion, the Intercontinental Champion and the Smackdown Tag Team Champions don't make the pay per view seems like missing the point.

Brock comes in to see Vince and says if Angle has a match, he wants one too. Vince gives him Gowen, making Brock laugh. He promises to break Gowen's leg tonight. As in his good leg. Well it wouldn't mean much otherwise.

We actually look back at A-Train brawling with Undertaker and pinning Stephanie in a match. Oh but that's not good enough so we also see the BUILD to the match, including A-Train talking to Stephanie in the back. Do they really think that fans sympathize or identify with Stephanie? Who would actually write that story other than Stephanie herself?

Zack Gowen's mother is here (Gowen is the hometown boy tonight) and is so proud of him but is also worried about seeing him get hurt.

### Billy Gunn/Jamie Noble vs. Basham Brothers

Tazz: "Jamie's Got a Gunn!" I've heard worse. The brawl starts on the floor with the announcers putting Shaniqua over as a monster, making me worried that she's supposed to be the star of the whole thing. Billy gives Danny a tilt-a-whirl powerslam to start as the announcers talk about Lesnar wanting to break Gowen's leg. Why is this so shocking? It

kind of fits what he would normally do no?

The Bashams beat Billy down in the corner as Cole laments Stephanie not being here tonight. See, she can show up and fix everything of course. Billy gets stomped down for two more and some crossface shots to the face make it even worse. A charge in the corner misses though and Gunn Diamond Cuts his way into the hot tag to Noble.

Jamie comes in and starts cleaning house, including a swinging neckbreaker for two on Doug. A good looking top rope elbow gets the same as everything breaks down. Shaniqua pulls Jamie out of the ring and clotheslines Nidia and Torrie down with ease. The Fameasser plants Doug but the twins switch, including a riding crop shot to Gunn. Doug small packages Jamie for the pin.

**Rating:** D+. The Bashams get a much needed win but this story hasn't exactly done anyone any favors. Billy is bringing Jamie down and it's not exactly helping Noble to have him as a good guy when he's a naturally good heel. The Bashams are playing second fiddle to their manager, who isn't interesting in the first place. But at least we got that "funny" hotel segment between the good guys.

Lesnar threatens to break Gowen's leg again.

We look at Brock destroying Spanky last week. Cool. Now do the same to Gowen.

### Brock Lesnar vs. Zack Gowen

Gowen's entrance focuses on his mom so you know this one is going to hurt. Before the bell, Brock goes outside and gets in the mom's face but she won't even shake his hand. The distraction lets Gowen hit a dive which I don't believe would drop Lesnar for a second. Brock throws him down but gets hit with the prosthetic leg, only to drive Gowen into the post. Back in and we get the opening bell as the slaughter is in full swing. The mom continues to look completely emotionless, even as Brock hits the double powerbomb. A chair to the head gives Gowen the DQ win in short order. Good. Now keep him off TV.

Gowen is busted open (and it is a GUSHER, which is probably the reason for the TV-MA) so Brock F5's the leg into the post. Another chair shot and another F5 into the post seems to destroy Gowen's leg. Cole is LIVID over the idea that Lesnar would do this as Gowen goes out on a stretcher. Brock shoves the stretcher over and the VERY bloody Gowen crashes down while his mother...looks exactly the same as she did earlier.

Back from a break and we see the attack again. Cole: "Tragedy has struck Smackdown." Oh good grief. Cole says he's breaking tradition and taking sides here to rant against Lesnar. Tazz even takes off the sunglasses to talk about how he didn't know Brock like he thought he did. This is as forced as trying to make me believe that Gowen could compete against WWE wrestlers.

### Undertaker/Orlando Jordan vs. John Cena/A-Train

Pre-match, Cena rants about hating Detroit. If they think he sucks, Cena knows they swallow. Cole says that Vince has taken over with Stephanie gone. You know, because Stephanie was above Vince when she was around. Undertaker takes Cena down to start and hammers on the ribs but stops to glare at A-Train.

Back up and Cena low bridges Undertaker out to the floor for some shots to the back, only to get his throat snapped over the ropes. Old School gets two as Cole talks about the devastating work Undertaker did to Cena's shoulder a few weeks back. It's so devastating that Cena has been hiding the effects ever since.

Jordan and A-Train come in with A-Train easily suckering Jordan in and giving him an early beating. Orlando gets in a DDT and is already crawling over to the corner despite taking all of thirty seconds of offense. Undertaker comes in to do the work, including Snake Eyes into the big boot on Cena.

The alternating corner clotheslines have the villains in trouble and Undertaker grabs a dragon sleeper on Cena. Jordan cuts off A-Train and gets the Derailer for his efforts (my goodness this guy is worthless). Undertaker chokeslams A-Train but gets caught in a spinebuster from Cena. The Last Ride is broken up by a chain shot to the ribs, giving Cena the

pin.

**Rating:** D. The only thing I got out of this is a good laugh at how pathetic Jordan was. Really, he gets beaten down for thirty seconds and can't even get to his feet? This is supposed to be the guy Undertaker is mentoring? Cena pinning Undertaker was the right ending, even if Cena is another name on the long list of people not making the pay per view. Again: Shane McMahon vs. Eric Bischoff and La Resistance are part of an eight match card where ten people are in two matches. If you can't fit three different titles and an up and comer like Cena on there, learn to plan better.

Post break Sable hits on A-Train and wants to thank him on behalf of Vince for taking care of Stephanie. She gives him a hotel room key.

#### Eddie Guerrero/Rhyno vs. Chris Benoit/Tajiri

Rhyno gets a ride in the low rider. Tazz: "CALL THE ZOO!" Eddie has the REALLY strong hydraulics this week as he gets half of the car about three and a half feet off the ground and holds it there to show off. Eddie and Benoit start things off with Guerrero actually winning a chop off and sending Benoit into the corner. Benoit is back with a backdrop but Eddie hides behind the referee and gets in a shot to the knee.

It's off to Rhyno for a backbreaker but Eddie has to break up a very fast Crossface. Eddie comes back in with a seated abdominal stretch, followed by the rolling suplexes. He takes a bit too long going up though and it's a superplex back down, allowing the double tag to Rhyno and Tajiri. Rhyno gets caught in the Tarantula, leaving Benoit to hit the Swan Dive on Eddie. Tajiri decks Benoit by mistake though and the Gore is good for the pin.

**Rating:** C+. The four way is the only match I'm looking forward to outside of Lesnar vs. Angle and a good tag match helped the building process. Rhyno getting the pin gives him a little momentum and helps shake the feeling that only Benoit and Eddie are likely to leave as champion. This was an example of letting the wrestlers wrestle and that's always going to work.

Post match Benoit puts Rhyno in the Crossface but Eddie breaks it up with a belt shot. Just to show it's not personal, Eddie belts both Rhyno and Tajiri as a bonus.

### Kurt Angle vs. Big Show

Non-title and hardcore. Angle waits at the entrance and hammers on Show as soon as he comes through the curtain. Show gets the better of the fight and knocks Angle down at ringside. It's already table time but Show slides it in instead of setting it up. A slam onto the unset table keeps Angle down and a legdrop is good for two. There's a big toss across the ring and one of those scary loud chops to Angle's chest.

Show puts the table in front of Angle in the corner yet seems surprised when Angle shoves it into his charging head. The Angle Slam gets a delayed two but Show kicks him out to the floor again. The table is set but Kurt gets in a chair shot. That has very little effect though as Show punches the chair back into his face and Angle is down again.

A powerbomb through the table is countered with a chair to the head for two more, followed by a running chair shot to put Show outside. Show drops him over the barricade and loads up the steps but Angle grabs him low for a breather. The ankle lock over the steps is broken up so Angle knocks him over the table. An Arabian facebuster of all things gets two on Show but the Angle Slam through the table is enough to put Show away.

**Rating:** B. Actually a fun brawl here as they were doing some different spots instead of all the usual stuff you would see here. Angle getting a win helps, even though Big Show got in a lot of offense. Of course that doesn't mean much as Big Show is another name not on Summerslam but why let that get in the way of a good match?

Lesnar comes out for the staredown to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B-. This is a harder one to rate as the wrestling was good for the most part (the bad matches were mostly short) but it didn't do a great job of making me want to see the pay per view. Undertaker vs. A-Train is going to be about Stephanie vs. Sable/Vince and I'm not exactly thrilled by the two good looking Smackdown matches. Maybe I'll be

surprised but with Raw looking dreadful, the possibilities aren't strong.

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

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

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# Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2009: Like It Would Be Anyone Else

## Royal Rumble 2009

Date: January 25, 2009

Location: Joe Louis Arena, Detroit, Michigan

Attendance: 16,685

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

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

No intro video this year. That's interesting.

## ECW Title: Jack Swagger vs. Matt Hardy

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

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

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

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

**Rating:** B-. Better match than I was expecting here with both guys looking good out there. Matt was getting close to being something decent as a singles guy and this was his way off ECW and onto Smackdown. Swagger would go on to win a world title and shock the world in the process before falling through the floor soon after. Solid opener here.

Orton arrives and gets glared at.

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

Melina is challenging and Beth has Santino with her here. Beth shoves her



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

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

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

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

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

Raw World Title: John Cena vs. John Bradshaw Layfield

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

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

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

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

Shawn gets in the ring and is staring at both guys. Both guys get up and Shawn superkicks John. As in the challenger/him employer. He also kicks the champion/the guy he was hired to take out before leaving. Shawn puts JBL's arm across Cena, causing the fans to chant for the champ. Another referee comes out and gets a two count for Layfield and both guys get up. Cena hits a quick AA on JBL to retain.

**Rating:** C-. The match itself was pretty dull but the drama worked well enough to make up for it. At the end of the day, JBL simply wasn't good enough at this point to hang in a world title match. Cena had to tone it

WAY down to let JBL keep up with him and it showed badly. Still though, Shawn more than makes up for it and would go on to have a masterpiece with Taker at Mania so all is well and good.

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

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

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

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

We head back inside again with Edge in full control including a spear in the corner. Jeff grabs a quick two off a sunset flip but gets clotheslined right back down. Off to a body vice by Edge to slow things down a bit. Jeff fights up and hits a mule kick before going up top, only to jump into a dropkick from Edge for two. Now Edge goes to get two chairs but Jeff spears him down off the apron before it can be brought in.

Edge gets back to the apron but gets pulled down into a Twist of Fate onto said apron, sending both guys down onto the floor. Since it's Jeff

vs. Edge, here's a ladder. Jeff spreads Edge out on the table but Chavo climbs up to slow Jeff down. Edge moves, so Jeff hits a HUGE splash to put Chavo through the table instead. Back in and Jeff gets two off a high cross body. Edge gets up first and pulls a buckle off, only to get caught in the Whisper in the Wind for two.

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

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

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

That makes no sense and I don't get what they think this is accomplishing. It didn't work out well for Russo and it won't work out for the WWE. Matt vs. Jeff didn't work at the end of the day, mainly because I don't think people wanted to see them fight. I'll give them this: they did come up with a logical reason for Matt to turn so it's not a terrible idea. It just wasn't the best option they had.

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

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

## Royal Rumble

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

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

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

Since no one else can get a good match out of Kozlov, you know HHH is going to try his hand at him. They stare each other down and Kozlov hits the headbutt to take him down. The facebuster stuns Kozlov and HHH throws him out wise ease. It's HHH, Morrison and Mysterio in there at the moment with Rey chilling in the corner. The knee to the face puts Morrison down and Orton is #8.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mysterio dumps Henry off camera to thankfully get someone out of the ring. HHH is upside down in the corner but he winds up sitting on the

apron. Here's Kofi at #22 to speed things up as well as he can with so many people around him. Taker dumps Benjamin and Kane is #23. After beating up a few people he stares his brother down before they start working together to chokeslam some people.

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

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

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

Jericho tries to put a sleeper on Show but it gets about as far as you would expect. Taker throws Punk to the apron as Show dumps Truth. Punk fires off some kicks and hangs on three times so Show finally knocks him out cold and out to the floor. Show knocks out Knox and Mysterio as Horny gets in for no apparent reason. Finlay tries to save him and gets dumped for his efforts at good parenting.

Jericho hits a Codebreaker on Kane and Orton hits the Elevated DDT on HHH. Taker and Show have their required staredown and RVD hits the Five Star on Orton. Jericho comes up behind Van Dam to dump him while Rob holds his ribs. That's his last WWE appearance to date. Chris turns

around and sees Taker who tosses him with glee. Legacy teams up to put Kane out and we're down to Taker, Big Show, HHH and Legacy.

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

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

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

**Overall Rating:** C-. It's clear that the company was in a transitional period here and that makes this a hard one to get through. There's enough good stuff here to check it out, but it's nothing worth going out of your way to see. The only really solid match is Edge vs. Hardy and even that is nothing really worth seeing. This is a rare instance where the Rumble didn't dictate how the show went as the rest of it is a far easier sit than the Rumble itself.

#### Ratings Comparison

Jack Swagger vs. Matt Hardy

Original: B

Redo: B-



Melina vs. Beth Phoenix

Original: C-

Redo: D+

John Cena vs. John Bradshaw Layfield

Original: C

Redo: C-

Edge vs. Jeff Hardy

Original: B-

Redo: B

Royal Rumble

Original: D

Redo: D

Overall Rating

Original: B+

Redo: C-

So let me get this straight: every match is literally within a single grade of the original but the original is nearly two grades higher? Dang I was REALLY feeling generous that day. A show with an hour long match that gets a D doesn't sound like a B+ overall to me.

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

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

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# Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2008: Jeff Could Win

## Royal Rumble 2008

Date: January 27, 2008

Location: Madison Square Garden, New York City New York

Attendance: 20,798

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

We're in New York City again and there are three main events tonight. We have the usual Rumble and Edge defending the Smackdown Title against Mysterio, but the interesting one here was Orton defending against Jeff Hardy. I don't know how they did it, but the company did an OUTSTANDING job of making Hardy seem like he had a very real chance of taking the title tonight and shocking the world. I had no idea who was going to win and I LOVED that feeling. Let's get to it.

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

## Ric Flair vs. MVP

Flair's career is on the line but MVP's US Title isn't. Flair talks about

having his first match here in 1976 but MVP's music cuts him off. MVP takes him into the corner to start and he's BALLIN already. Flair goes after the arm for a second before chopping away at the jumpsuit. MVP comes back with a running boot to the head for two before hooking a chinlock. The fans tell MVP that he sucks as he cranks on the chin.

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

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

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

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

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

### Chris Jericho vs. John Bradshaw Layfield

Feeling out process to start with JBL hiding in the corner and ropes a few times. Jericho forearms him down and pounds away but gets sent to the

floor. That doesn't last long as he slides right back in and hooks the Walls but JBL immediately grabs the rope. A baseball slide keeps Jibbles on the floor where he is sent into the steps. Back in and Jericho charges into a hot shot to put both guys down.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

when they're nearly caught. The referee ejects them anyway.

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

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

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

**Rating:** C+. This was ok but you kind of expect more from Edge vs. Rey Mysterio. The ending was about Vickie, which would become a running theme over the next few months. Edge being all conniving and backstabbing the already evil Vickie was awesome stuff, but getting there was tedious at times. Still not a bad match at all though.

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

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

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

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

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

#### Raw World Title: Randy Orton vs. Jeff Hardy

Jeff is Intercontinental Champion. Feeling out process to start with Jeff taking over via a headlock on the mat. An atomic drop gets two but Orton hits him in the face and brags to the crowd about it. Orton gets sent to the floor and a baseball slide sends him into the barricade. Hardy follows with a plancha to the floor as JR SCREAMS to get Orton back in the ring. Randy tries to walk out with the belt but Hardy will have none of that. Orton is rammed into the announce table and back inside we go.

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

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

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

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

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

We get the Rumble by the Numbers video, which is always a favorite of mine. Here are those numbers:

20 years of history

21 winners

569 superstars in the Rumble

36 eliminations (by Austin, since broken by Shawn)

11 Rumbles for Shawn (since broken by Kane)

11 eliminations for Kane in 2001

3 identities under which Foley entered the Rumble in 1997

2 feet that must touch the ground

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

62:12 of time that Mysterio was in the Rumble

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

3 wins for Austin, still a record

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

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

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

I love that.

### Royal Rumble

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

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

Old School is countered and Shawn hits an atomic drop as Great Khali is #4. Taker jumps him as he comes in as Shawn is down from something we missed. The big chop puts Taker down as the fans tell Khali he can't wrestle. They grab each other by the throat but Khali misses a chop and



gets eliminated. Shawn never touched Khali but charges at Taker when it's just the two of them.

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

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

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

At the moment we have Taker, Shawn, Holly, Batista, Palumbo and Morrison in the ring with Horny underneath. #12 is CM Punk as Morrison makes ANOTHER impressive save. Punk is insanely popular in New York of course and fires off running knees in the corner to everyone he sees, only to charge into a clothesline from Undertaker. Morrison, the guy that took the ECW Title from Punk, pounds away on him. Punk takes Palumbo out but gets jumped from behind by Shawn.

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

badly pounds on everyone at once.

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

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

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

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

There's a Mic Check to Miz and a kick to Taker after he sits up from something. A chokeslam puts Kennedy down and Taker starts beating up everyone. Here's Big Daddy V at #24. Taker shoves Snitsky out, Shawn superkicks Taker out and Kennedy throws Shawn out. The only question I

have from that: why is Taker on his feet after being superkicked? Taker drops a leg on the announce table on Snitsky because he's a big jerk at times.

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

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

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

The roof is blown off the Garden, because JOHN CENA is #30. This is shocking as Cena had torn his pec and had announced that he would be gone until Wrestlemania at the earliest. Imagine that: lying about an injury and getting a big response from the crowd. Who would have ever thought of that, and in wrestling of all things? Carlito, Chavo and Henry are all gone in about fifteen seconds before it's HHH staring Cena down.

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

catchphrases and it's on.

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

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

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

Cena celebrates to end the show.

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

### Ratings Comparison

Ric Flair vs. MVP

Original: B-

Redo: C

John Bradshaw Layfield vs. Chris Jericho

Original: D+

Redo: D+

Edge vs. Rey Mysterio

Original: A-

Redo: C+

Jeff Hardy vs. Randy Orton

Original: C-

Redo: C+

Royal Rumble

Original: C-

Redo: C+

Overall Rating

Original: C+

Redo: C-

Wow the Smackdown title match really changed things around here.

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

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

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume VI: July – December 1999 in e-book or paperback. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2017/11/22/new-book-kbs-monday-nitro-and-thunder-reviews-volume-vi/>

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# Ring of Honor TV – January 17, 2018: He'll Be Your Hero and He'll Be Your Villain

## Ring of Honor

Date: January 17, 2018

Location: 2300 Arena, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Ian Riccaboni, Colt Cabana

We've got a stacked show this week, including something resembling a dream match (I use that term kind of loosely) between Jay Lethal and Will Ospreay. In this case dream means more like "it should be very good", which is certainly not a bad thing to say about a match. Other than that there's probably more from new World Champion Dalton Castle so let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

## Jay Lethal vs. Will Ospreay

Ospreay's IWGP Junior Heavyweight Title isn't here yet so non-title. They fight over a wristlock to start and it's Jay being flipped over off a wristlock. Jay pops back up and shows Ospreay how to do a wristlock but the cartwheel into a basement dropkick is cut off. Lethal gets sent outside but is ready for Ospreay's handspring dive, grabbing his hands to take Will down.

The three straight suicide dives send Ospreay over the barricade and it's Marty Scurll coming out as we take a break. Back with Marty on commentary, explaining that he won at Final Battle because he brought out the old Lethal. Marty also demands a World Title match and that works

very well for me. Ospreay knocks Lethal into the corner and lights up his chest with a chop.

A tilt-a-whirl backbreaker gets Lethal out of trouble and he scores with an uppercut. Ian: "To the European himself." Marty found that one HILARIOUS and...eh I love easy jokes but not really. Back up and Ospreay kicks Lethal in the chest, followed by an enziguri in the corner. Will sends him outside and the Flying Space Tiger Drop (cartwheel into a moonsault over the top) crushes Jay as we take a second break.

Back again with the Oscutter being caught in a torture rack (Marty: "THE LETHAL EXPRESS!"). Jay rolls it forward like a reverse Regal Roll (Ian: "HE'LL BE YOUR HERO!") for two and Marty is losing it on these near falls. Ospreay is right back with a reverse Impaler for two of his own, only to walk into the Lethal Combination. Jay's Figure Four is countered into a small package but Jay counters the Oscutter into a cutter of his own. The Lethal Injection puts Ospreay away at 16:37.

**Rating:** B. Yep it was a very good match and again, that's all you need on something like this. They were trading the big bombs here but they also played up the idea that they knew each other very well, which makes for a nice story. The Oscutter into the cutter was a very cool counter and Marty wanting to face Jay again could set him up for the title shot in New Orleans.

It's time for Coleman's Pulpit with guest Jonathan Gresham, who is in a much higher chair. Because he's not that tall you see. Coleman starts in with the short jokes but Gresham talks about being trained by Mr. Hughes in Atlanta. We hear about Gresham's not great win/loss record and Coleman laughs a bit. Gresham talks about mastering his style and the rules he would like for people like him. Sounds like a return of the Pure Rules format. And that's it, ending another, ahem, thrilling, Coleman's Pulpit. This is one of the lamest interview segments in wrestling history and it's not getting any better. Just drop it already.

### Kenny King vs. Brian Milonas

Milonas is the big fat guy who was pretty terrible in the Top Prospect Tournament. Brian throws him into the air but King lands on his feet out

of a hiptoss. A kick to the head doesn't do much to Brian but Kenny low bridges him to the floor with some more success. The corkscrew dive barely connects but let's stop for a picture with a fan. Back in and King chops away to little avail as the big splash in the corner cuts him off. A twisting sunset flip out of the corner doesn't work but King avoids the sitdown splash. King kicks him in the head and finally drops the big man. The springboard Blockbuster ends Milonas at 3:54.

**Rating:** C-. There's only so much you can do in something like this and Milonas isn't exactly much besides a tree to be knocked down. King needs to be built back up, especially for what seems to be a rematch for the title in King's hometown of Las Vegas for the Anniversary Show. Not a terrible match and about as good as it could have been.

Post match King wants to fight Silas Young and gets his wish, only to get jumped from behind by Milonas. Beer City Bruiser gets back in for the beatdown, meaning Milonas is Bruiser's partner as they go after the Tag Team Titles. I've...well I'm sure of a worse sounding team somewhere, though Bruiser has been growing on me.

So Cal Uncensored is in the ring for a chat. Before they can get very far though, ROH COO Joe Koff comes out to say the fans don't want to see him. They want to see the best wrestlers, but that's not what So Cal Uncensored is. They're the most disruptive though and Koff should just fire them right now. Daniels threatens to go to TNA or WWE and tell his new bosses all of Koff's plans for expansion. Koff isn't worried because Daniels' contract expires in a year. Therefore, at Final Battle 2018, the Addiction is done. ENOUGH WITH THE CORPORATE STUFF! It's annoying in WWE and it's even worse elsewhere. Cut it out already.

The Briscoes want their titles back.

### The Kingdom vs. Dalton Castle/The Boys

O'Ryan and Castle start things off with the champ taking TK down without much effort. Back up and a ducked clothesline allows Dalton to hit the peacock pose, only to get jumped by the now legal Marseglia. Boy #2 (according to Ian, after a debate) tags himself in and it's #1 springboarding in with a crossbody for two. Taven comes back in and



demands to face Castle as we hear about him wanting the title. Egads please don't do that as I can't handle the promos.

Castle wrestles him down again but can't get a German suplex. Taven scores with a running enziguri though, only to be sent outside. Castle loads up a dive but stops for that long striding strut of his. #2 dives in with a stomp onto Marseglia's arm as we take a break. Back with #1 being sent into the barricade twice in a row to really put him down.

A good looking double flapjack sets up a backsplash/legdrop combo for two as the beating continues. Taven tells O'Ryan to let the Boy go and a missed charge allows #1 to get over to Castle for the hot tag. Dalton gets to clean house until he tries a Tombstone on Taven, leading to seven or eight reversals, capped off by Castle planting Matt. The Bang A Rang drops Taven again and the Julie Newmar (close to a crossface chickenwing) makes Marseglia tap at 11:53.

**Rating:** C. The match was fine, though my complete lack of interest in all things Kingdom isn't changing anytime soon. It doesn't help that O'Ryan and Taven look alike, but it's just Taven and two goons, which doesn't help the fact that Taven isn't very interesting on his own. Castle continues to look like a star though and I'd actually be really interested to see him vs. Scurll down the line. The star power is there and I'm glad they took a chance on him at Final Battle.

**Overall Rating:** B-. Pretty good show here with only the worthless Coleman's Pulpit holding things down. It's too early to start worrying about the next pay per view but for now, things are looking fairly solid around here. Castle is an energetic champion, the Briscoes are looking more awesome by the week and King vs. Young could be a nice feud. I'm liking things around here right now and that's not something I can say around here very often.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume VI: July – December 1999 in e-book or paperback. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2017/11/22/new-book-kbs-monday-nitro-and-thunder-reviews-volume-vi/>

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# WWE Announces #1 Moment in Raw History

<https://wrestlingrumors.net/1-moment-monday-night-raw-history/>

Again?

So WWE has put together the top 100 moments in Raw history with the top 25 being voted on by the fans. This Monday a countdown video was released and the top five were:

5. The First Stunner to Vince
4. Chris Jericho Debuts
3. Occupy Raw
2. Pipe Bomb
1. Austin and the Beer Truck

I'm kind of stunned that the Pipe Bomb was allowed to be mentioned but it had to be on there. The beer truck...ok I guess, but it never struck me as being head and shoulders

above everything. Actually it was the beer truck that was also voted the #1 moment at the ten year anniversary.

I'd have gone with Foley winning the title for the first time. It's emotional, memorable, entertaining and FREAKING LOUD. That one sticks with a lot of people and almost every big name in the company is right there for it.

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## **2017 Awards: Moment of the Year**

I saved this one for last for...well no apparent reason actually.

While there are all kinds of great matches and promos, sometimes it's something very simple that work better than anything else. The moments are the things that you remember more than anything else and some of these are bigger than others. Some of them are important moments and some of them are just fun, but they all belong on here.

Before we get to the regular nominees, we need to get a quick honorable mention. The night after Wrestlemania, Vince McMahon was about to announce the new General Manager of Raw. He mentioned the new GM being bald...and here comes Teddy Long to accept the offer. Teddy started making a tag match but Vince said it wasn't him. Teddy said "my bad" and danced off into the back. I laughed very hard and while it wasn't important, it entertained me when I was sick and I'll always take that.

Sticking with the night after Wrestlemania, there was the

opening of Raw. Just...WOW. The opening sequence felt like it went on for an hour with the THANK YOU TAKER chants but once Reigns came out, the fans absolutely went off on him because he had taken their hero. This was pure anger from the crowd and that's exactly what it was supposed to be. The follow up needed to be better but what an opening to the biggest Raw of the year.

What was the follow up? That would be Braun Strowman turning over an ambulance with Reigns inside. I'm not even sure what to say about that. Of course the visual was faked but at the same....HE TURNED AN AMBULANCE OVER! What else can you really ask here? It was one of the coolest visuals WWE has put together in a long time and made Strowman feel like a star.

It's been too long since we've gone down to NXT so we'll have to look at Aleister Black saying Velveteen Dream's name. I called this a promo but when the whole thing is four words long, I'm not sure you can really call it a promo. The idea of giving Dream everything that he wanted in the worst circumstances was poetic justice and an amazing moment at the same time.

We'll stick around in NXT with Tommaso Ciampa turning on Johnny Gargano to split up DIY. They took the perfect amount of time to make this work and the Chicago fans were STUNNED. This is going to set up one of the biggest matches NXT has had in years and when Ciampa comes back, likely to screw Gargano over somehow, the reaction is going to be amazing. The split couldn't have been better though and the beatdown worked very well also. Throw in the awesome shock and it's very high on the list.

In a moment that I was lucky enough to be there for, we have the Hardys returning to WWE at Wrestlemania. I was in the stadium for that and heard New Day say that there was going to be another team. During the pause, I got to my feet and said out loud "they wouldn't". And then they did with the Hardys

returning only a night after having a huge ladder match in Ring of Honor. This felt big and was the big moment that Wrestlemania needed. Well one of them at least.

The final two are about as different as you can be and we'll start with the comedy option. Back on February 13, Chris Jericho was trying to show Kevin Owens that they were still great friends. This led to Jericho, in a shiny outfit that only he could pull off, presenting Owens various presents (including a painting involving the two of them and Jericho without pants) but the big finale made the whole thing. Owens gave Jericho a new list but it had Jericho's name on it. Jericho pulls the list out of the box....and it was the List of KO. The beatdown was on and the Wrestlemania match was made.

They got me. I'm not exactly easy to surprise in wrestling but I was actually shocked when that List of KO appeared. It was the perfect way to split up the team and Owens looked like the biggest heel in the world. At the same time though, Jericho looked like he was trying to be a good guy but Owens just turned on him. That's how to make Jericho a face, and it worked to perfection. Amazing segment here and it's going to take something special to top it.

And then the Undertaker retired (I'm going with that until I see otherwise). He took his gear off and stood in the middle of the ring in front of the Orlando crowd and then put it back on for one final time. When I looked at him, I saw Mark Callaway in Undertaker's clothes, which was the first time that had ever been seen. Undertaker walked up the aisle and then descended through the stage to say goodbye. This one doesn't need much more of an explanation and if it stands, will be one of the best moments in wrestling history.

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# 2017 Awards: Non-Wrestler of the Year

Who says you have to be a wrestler to be in wrestling?

While this might as well be called the Paul Heyman Award, there are certainly several candidates for it this time around. It might be an announcer or an interviewer but there are a variety of options this time around. I'm not sure if anyone is going to get past Heyman this year, but when you show up every now and then, it's easier to look great.

Actually yeah, this year someone can pass Heyman for the exact reason mentioned: he's not around very often and that brings him down a lot. Sometimes you need to do more than talk about how awesome Brock Lesnar is and while Heyman can do that better than anyone else, I'd like to see him around a little more often to declare him the best in this role.

We'll go with someone who is more of a jack of all trades now with Corey Graves. Is there anything this guy can't do? He hosts shows, he does commentary on both major shows and he rips on Byron Saxton like no one else can do. Graves is fun to listen to and has some rather good heel roles in there, which few others know how to do anymore. He's very talented and I'd love to see him do this for a very long time to come.

There's also perennial nominee Dario Cueto, who brings a completely new dimension to this by being an actual actor. He's capable of being incredible menacing while also calculating, but that evil smile is just perfect for looking like the biggest villain in the world. I'm really hoping he's back for the next season as the show really wouldn't work without him.

If Corey is a jack of all trades, Renee Young is a jill of them. She's the perfect combination of smart, funny, edgy,

flirty and interesting that you can imagine her pulling off anything you ask her to do. She does the occasional storyline but for the most part, she's the most polished interviewer WWE has had in a very long time. There's a certain charm to her that you can't make up and it works like a...well a charm actually.

Above all though, there's Zelina Vega. To have showed up from pretty much nowhere and become the best manager in NXT is quite the accomplishment. Vega and Andrade Cien Almas are one of the best pairings around as Vega is the perfect compliment to her. She's stunning, manipulative, evil, conniving and can be physical when she needs to be. It's made Almas interesting, which seemed to be one of the most impossible tasks in all of NXT. Vega pulled it off though and that's enough to win this hands down.

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## **2017 Awards: Show of the Year**

It all kind of depends on this no?

Sure there are good matches and good promos, but which of them come together to make the best overall presentation? Some of them are of course better than others and some don't need to exist (which they don't) but when they work well, they can be some of the best shows you'll see in a long time.

We'll start things off at the beginning of the year with Wrestle Kingdom XI. The Wrestlemania of New Japan almost never fails to impress The main event was one of the best matches of the year and while I liked Kushida's match better (which tends to be the case more often than not), this was an excellent show from top to bottom. A bit long for my taste, but the biggest show of the year should be longer.

Speaking of the New Japan Wrestlemania, I'll throw in the WWE's Wrestlemania as well. The show didn't quite live up to the standards of some of its predecessors but that's not to say it wasn't very good. The Hardys return was a great surprise and the ending made it feel historic, definitely giving this some great moments top to bottom. If this had that one blow away match, it would probably win the whole thing.

We'll wrap up the main roster portion here with Royal Rumble, which did have that blow away match as John Cena defeated AJ Styles to win his sixteenth World Title. The Rumble itself might not have been the classic it needed to be, but the drama near the end was very good and there wasn't a really bad match on the show. It's one of my favorite shows of the year and this one didn't disappoint whatsoever.

But yeah, this is all about Takeover and that's really not a surprise. We'll start with Takeover: Chicago, which had the Match of the Year in Tyler Bate vs. Pete Dunne II but also a heck of a ladder match for the Tag Team Titles, followed by the awesome split of DIY. The triple threat for the Women's Title was very good and the NXT Title match worked as well, because as is the rule in NXT: you really don't have a single bad match.

Overall though, Takeover: WarGames is the Show of the Year and it's not even close. Where do you begin with this one? The NXT Title match was a great surprise, WarGames actually delivered in spades and there's the amazing (and still underrated by me) Velveteen Dream vs. Aleister Black match. The Women's Title was won by someone new and the opening boss fight were good as well. This one delivered as only NXT can and it beat everything else in the year.