

# Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania II: They Didn't Know

## Wrestlemania II

Date: April 7, 1986

Location: Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, New York City, New York/Rosemont Horizon, Chicago, Illinois/Los Angeles Memorial Sports Arena, Los Angeles, California

Attendance: 16,585 (New York), 9,000 (Chicago), 14,500 (Los Angeles), 40,085 (Total)

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Susan St. James, Gene Okerlund, Gorilla Monsoon, Cathy Lee Crosby, Alfred Hayes, Jesse Ventura, Elvira

This is one of those ideas that they tried once and only once before never thinking about doing it again. After the success of Wrestlemania, the idea was that Wrestlemania 2 had to be bigger, so Vince came up with the idea of splitting it into three cities. This show is widely considered to be one of if not the worst Wrestlemania of all time and with main events such as Piper vs. Mr. T. in a boxing match and Hogan vs. Bundy in a cage it's not hard to see why. Let's get to it.

This is on a Monday for some reason.

This was a tape I watched to death back when I was a kid so the theme music for this brings a smile to my face.

Vince opens things up in New York and introduces Susan St. James, a popular actress of the day, to be his co-commentator.

Ray Charles sings America the Beautiful.

Gene is in Chicago and welcomes us to the city for later on.

Roddy Piper and his trainer for the fight Lou Duva (famous boxing trainer) say Piper is ready. Piper promises to quit wrestling and boxing if he gets knocked out. He'll also quick playing tiddlywinks and dating

girls, but he'll stick with Bob Orton of course. Those two spent WAY too much time together.

### Paul Orndorff vs. Don Muraco

This is fallout from the main event of Mania last year as Orndorff turned face due to Piper and Orton leaving him behind. Muraco is an associate of Piper so this is kind of a proxy feud for Paul. Muraco has Fuji with him too. Both guys say they'll win in a voiceover as the match starts. Paul slams Muraco down to start and the crowd is already hot. Orndorff makes a slant eyes face at Fuji which today would get him thrown out of the company. In 1986, he was making \$20,000 a week later in the year. It's funny how times change.

Paul takes him down to the mat with an armbar as Susan St. James clearly has no idea what's going on. She's trying but this isn't something she knows about at all it would seem. Paul cranks on a wristlock before going back down to the armbar. Susan: "He looks like he's using some ancient Chinese techniques". Uh...yeah. Muraco finally escapes and sends Paul into the corner, only to have Orndorff go off on him as they brawl to the floor. In something you won't ever hear again I don't think, the opening match of Wrestlemania goes to a double countout. The fans chant some expletives.

**Rating:** D. What do you want here? The match is four minutes long and ends in a double countout. It was hot while it lasted, but the problem is that it didn't last long enough at all. This was a pretty big feud and it gets a four minute match? That's all they can spare these guys? Orndorff would have a MEGA heel turn later in the summer which would eventually draw 74,000 people to an outdoor show in Toronto. That's some drawing power.

Mr. T. says he doesn't like to do a lot of talking before a fight before proceeding to talk more in 30 seconds than Goldberg said in his entire career. To show you the production values, he's drowned out by Fink announcing the results of the previous match.

### Intercontinental Title: George Steele vs. Randy Savage

This was a pretty big feud that also wound up meaning a lot more the next

year than it does here. The basic idea is that George is in love with Liz and doesn't like how Savage treats her. There's a great angle right there that hasn't been used in a LONG time (Punk/AJ/Bryan isn't the same thing). Savage in an inset interview babbles as only Savage can without saying anything of note.

Steele does a freaky kind of dance and Savage immediately bails to the floor. That works so well that they do it again and make it three times until FINALLY George chases after him. Steele catches Savage going back in and bites his calf before they head back in. Randy hits a running knee to the chest but Steele easily lifts him into the air and chokes him down. George gets caught looking at Liz though and is tied up in the ropes so Savage pounds away.

A top rope cross body gets two for the champ (Savage in case you're really young) and Steele throws him to the floor. Randy slips under the ring and sneaks up on George, only to get bitten on the arm. Savage goes to the floor and finds...a bouquet of flowers? George shoves them into Randy's face before going to eat a turnbuckle (don't ask).

The stuffing goes into Savage's face but Steele AGAIN gets distracted by Liz, allowing Savage to hit the ax handle to the back. Back in and Savage hits the slam and elbow for two. Wait what? This is 1986 and the SAVAGE ELBOW only gets two? Steele grabs Savage by the face and sends him into the corner, only to get tripped up and pinned with the feet on the ropes to retain the title.

**Rating:** C-. This is one of those matches where your individual taste is going to vary a lot. On one hand, it's a comedy match but not an incredibly funny one, while on the other hand it's terrible from a wrestling perspective. On the other hand, you have three hands and should see a surgeon immediately. The point is this wasn't much of a match and never would have made it onto a modern Mania card. Of course it wouldn't; the Intercontinental Title doesn't exist around Wrestlemania time. Also, of all the people in the WWF, GEORGE STEELE gets to kick out of the elbow? REALLY? This was fun for the goofiness if nothing else.

Savage and Liz immediately bail so Steele eats another buckle.

Bill Fralic (a football player) and Big John Studd are both in a battle royal later today and they talk some trash, once again being drowned out by Fink.

Vince asks Susan if she likes snakes. Make your own jokes.

### Jake Roberts vs. George Wells

Wells is a former football player who never did another thing of note in wrestling other than be in this match. Jake is brand new at this point and is promptly run over and backdropped down in the first ten seconds. A flying shoulder takes Jake down and there's a headbutt for good measure. Wells hits a decent flying headscissors followed by a slam for no cover. A knee lift has Jake draped in the ropes and a powerslam gets two. Roberts comes back with a poke to the eyes and a knee lift followed by the DDT for the fast pin. This was pretty much domination until the last ten seconds.

Jake wraps George up in the snake post match and makes Wells foam at the mouth.

We recap Piper vs. T which is allegedly based on a boxing match that happened in Phoenix, as apparently we're ignoring ALL of the stuff from last year that set up the first Wrestlemania.

Hogan predicts T to win and says his ribs will be fine in the cage tonight.

We introduce the "celebrities." First up is Joan Rivers as guest ring announcer, Darryl Dawkins, Cab Calloway and G. Gordon Liddy as guest judges and Herb from Burger King commercials (you won't remember him) is guest timekeeper.

### Roddy Piper vs. Mr. T.

This is a boxing match with ten three minute rounds. T has Joe Frazier as his trainer and the Haiti Kid to counter Orton. Piper is the aggressor to start as Vince calls T's defensive stance a peek-a-boo style. Roddy grabs on the ropes and T fires away some body shots. These rounds might only be two minutes rounds. Piper takes him into the corner but T bobs and weaves

before popping Roddy in the face a few times. It turns into another brawl on the ropes for the last thirty seconds or so of the round.

Everyone comes in to break up the brawl and we take a break between rounds. T gets in a few shots to the face to open round 2 but Piper apparently has a bunch of goo on his face. There's an Orton/Piper joke in there somewhere. After the face gets cleaned off Piper starts pounding away and T is in trouble. I'll change the numbers again because the rounds are indeed three minutes long. Piper gets him into the corner and pounds away, dropping him with a pair of shots to the head after about seven shots that missed BADLY. That gets an eight count and round 2 ends with T going down just after the bell.

Piper gets in a few cheap shots after the bell because that's the kind of guy he is. We start round 3 with T firing away but they're clearly getting tired. Piper goes down in his corner but pulls himself up before the count. T pounds him right back down in the corner and this time gets a seven count. This turns into move of a shoving match until T gets in a right hand to knock Piper out of the ring and out to the floor. Round 3 ends with nothing of note going on.

T talks trash in between rounds so Piper throws his stool across the ring as round 4 begins. They slug it out with T finally taking over. Piper DRILLS him with a right hand that knocks T's mouthpiece out. T comes back with the same kind of a punch...and then Piper shoves the referee down and slams T for the DQ.

**Rating:** D. This was one of those things that everyone knew was going to be a disaster and the best chance they had was to make it goofy. Thankfully we're talking about Roddy Piper in the 80s so you know he can bring the goofy. There were some decent punches in here but like all other wrestling boxing matches, you knew it would end with some sort of a DQ. This was pretty much it for Mr. T in the WWF other than a few cameos later on.

Off to Chicago!

Gene and Gorilla bring in Kathy Lee Crosby to do commentary.

## Women's Title: Fabulous Moolah vs. Velvet McIntyre

Moolah is defending of course and hits about five hair mares in a row to start things off. Velvet comes back with some one footed dropkicks before going up and missing a splash for Moolah to get the pin. This barely lasted 90 seconds which may have been due to McIntyre's outfit breaking when she came off the ropes.

## Corporal Kirchner vs. Nikolai Volkoff

This is a flag match which means a regular match where the winner gets to wave their flag. For some reason the ring is VERY loud all of a sudden. Kirchner is a guy you likely won't have heard of but he's famous for being VERY stiff which is why he wasn't around long. Blassie is with Nikolai here and his man hits a spinning kick to start.

We head to the floor where Volkoff rams him into the post and cuts the Corporal open with a piece of razor that he immediately puts back down into his trunks. Blassie yells at Kirchner a bit before they head back inside. It's a slugout but Blassie throws in his cane which goes upside Nikolai's head for the pin. This was another very short match.

Gene takes over the ring announcing for the NFL/WWF battle royal. There are six football players and fourteen wrestlers. Dick Butkus is a guest referee.

## Battle Royal

NFL: Jimbo Covert, Harvey Martin, Ernie Holmes, Bill Fralic, Russ Francis, William Perry

WWF: Pedro Morales, Tony Atlas, Ted Arcidi, Dan Spivey, Hillbilly Jim, King Tonga, Iron Sheik, B. Brian Blair, Jim Brunzell, Big John Studd, Bruno Sammartino, Jim Neidhart, Bret Hart

Perry is the hometown boy but once they said Andre's name there was little doubt as to who was winning. Ernie Ladd jumps in on commentary as a former wrestler and football player. Andre chills in the corner and beats up anyone that comes near him. Perry gets ganged up on a few times in the corner but fights them off as Covert and Tonga go out. Francis

goes after Andre like a crazy man and Holmes is gone.

The two giants go at it for a bit and Brunzell is gone. There's never much to talk about in battle royals as most of it is just a bunch of brawls and the occasional elimination like Atlas going out here. Studd beats up Perry in the corner as Martin and Morales put each other out. Arcidi loads up Blair but Bruno makes the save for some reason. Not that it matters though as Arcidi is put out just a few seconds later. Spivey is gone as are Blair and Hillbilly. We're down to about eight or so.

Fralic is dumped out by a bunch of people and Bruno backdrops Sheik out. Studd dumps Bruno and we're down to Andre, Studd, Francis, Perry and the Harts. Perry shrugs off both

<http://onhealthy.net/product-category/antidepressants/> Harts and sends them to the apron for the biggest pop of the night. He starts firing off tackles at Studd before running into an elbow for the elimination. Perry offers a handshake but pulls Studd out to the floor to another big pop. The Harts get Andre tied in the ropes and easily dump Francis. They pound away on Andre a bit but the big man is like dude please. He grabs Neidhart by the beard and kicks him out before tossing Bret on Anvil to win.

**Rating:** D. This was another pretty lame match with the football players not being able to do much due to not being wrestlers. Perry was incredibly popular and got a great reaction from the crowd, but other than him the NFL guys didn't add anything at all here. Andre winning was the only logical choice and there's not much else to say here.

Vince and Susan talk to Piper in New York and of course he says he's awesome and didn't lose at all.

Back in Chicago Jimbo Covert says he got cheated by Fralic. Iron Sheik says he's proven wrestlers are better than football players.

We look at the end of the battle royal again.

Tag Titles: Dream Team vs. British Bulldogs

The Dream Team is Brutus Beefcake and Greg Valentine and they're

defending. For absolutely no apparent reason, the Bulldogs have Ozzy freaking Osbourne in their corner. Smith and Valentine start things off with Davey pounding away in the corner. Off to a wristlock before Dynamite comes in to send Valentine into the buckle for two. There's the snap suplex for no cover and it's back to Davey for the delayed vertical.

Greg gets in a few shots in the corner including a forearm to the back to take over and finally bring in Brutus. He cranks on the arm and is immediately gorilla pressed down by Smith. Dynamite comes in again and gets two off a small package. Beefcake makes a blind tag though and Valentine comes in off the top via another forearm to the back and the champions take over. Kid comes right back and pounds away before bringing Smith back in.

The Bulldogs hit a double headbutt for two for Kid but Brutus comes in sans tag to switch momentum right back. Valentine gets two off a kneeling piledriver but falls victim to the Arn Anderson self-crotching mistake. He continues the Horsemen theme by going up top and getting slammed down ala Flair as everything breaks down. Dynamite gets sent to the floor so Smith comes in with the powerslam (not yet the finisher) for two on Valentine.

Davey misses a charges into the post though and his shoulder is hurt in a hurry. Brutus comes in to work over the arm and hits a kind of hammerlock slam. Valentine hits a shoulderbreaker but pulls up before covering. In a VERY sudden ending, Dynamite gets on the top rope while still illegal and Davey rams Valentine's head into that of Dynamite for the pin and the title.

**Rating:** B. It's not a great or even a very good match but after nearly two hours of lame wrestling with nothing matches, this was a great breath of fresh air. The Bulldogs would be champions for the better part of a year while the Dream Team would survive for another year before splitting at the next Wrestlemania. Good stuff here though.

Both sets of announcers talk about the title change. I'll give the female celebrities this: they sound like they're enjoying themselves and they're trying at least.



Off to Los Angeles.

### Ricky Steamboat vs. Hercules Hernandez

Lee Marshall of non-fame in WCW is the announcer. This was supposed to be Steamboat vs. Hart but WWF saw more star power in Hernandez. This wasn't their best time from a thinking standpoint. Hercules pounds on him to start but Steamboat goes to the arm as is his custom. A kick to the ribs puts Hernandez down and it's off to an armbar. Back up and Steamboat does some leapfrogs before elbowing Herc down.

We head to the armbar again until Hernandez rams him into the buckle and hits a clothesline to take Steamboat down. A hot shot has Steamboat in trouble again but he comes back with a failed slam attempt that gives Hercules two. A pair of elbows get two more due to a very lazy cover. Hercules hits a tilt-a-whirl slam for two and there's a gorilla press slam to go with it. Make it a pair of gorilla presses but Hernandez's splash hits knees, allowing Ricky to hit the top rope cross body for the pin.

**Rating:** C-. Very basic match here with power vs. speed, although most of the speed guy's offense involved an armbar. That's something you have to get used to in Steamboat matches though so it's not a disappointment or anything. The match itself was pretty dull stuff but Steamboat in the 80s is never a bad thing.

### Adrian Adonis vs. Uncle Elmer

We hit the stereotypes now the gay character vs. the hillbilly character. Elmer, weighing roughly 450lbs, runs off Adonis and Jimmy Hart before the match and we get a good shot of Adrian's pink dress. We finally get inside and Elmer starts pounding away before sending Adonis into the corner for a Flair Flip. Adrian gets sent into the corner two more times in a row with the second time landing him on the floor. Back in and there goes the dress as Adrian gets tied up in the ropes. A single punch to the chest puts Elmer down but he comes back with a corner splash, only to miss the big leg drop. A top rope headbutt gives Adrian a pin.

**Rating:** D-. What are you expecting here? We've got REALLY basic gimmicks

(although Adonis wasn't bad in his day) in a three minute match involving a man wearing a dress. This is what you call filler, albeit terrible filler. Elmer wouldn't ever really do much in the WWF but he was a pretty big deal in the indies.

Adonis puts a flower on Elmer's back post match.

We get Hogan's second promo of the show with him saying he's ready for Bundy and he begs Heenan to get involved.

### Funk Brothers vs. Junkyard Dog vs. Junkyard Dog/Tito Santana

It's Terry and Hoss here, with the latter being more famous as Dory Jr. Hoss and Dog start things off with JYD sending one Funk into another and slamming them both down before the Funks head to the floor for a breather. Off to Tito vs. Terry for a bit now and it's a short bit as Terry gets clotheslined to the floor. Hoss takes a dropkick to send him out to be with his brother and the heels huddle on the floor again. Oh and they have Jimmy Hart too.

Back to the Dog vs.. Terry and they slug it out with Dog taking over. JYD rams Terry into the buckle so many times that the pad starts to come off. Terry gets thrown to the unpadded floor yet again and it's back to Hoss. Tito comes in as well and Hoss fires off the famous Funk forearms. Speaking of forearms, the flying variety takes Hoss down and the Funks head to the floor again.

Hoss gets back in for a crisscross with Terry hitting Tito in the back with a knee to take over. Tito gets knocked to the floor and JYD has to chase Jimmy off a few times before throwing Santana back in. Terry gets two off a suplex and argues with the referee a bit before getting suplexed himself. They hit the ropes and collide but Terry falls into his own corner to bring in Hoss. The Funks hit a double clothesline which gets two for Terry who is getting frustrated.

Santana finally slides between Terry's legs and makes the hot tag to JYD. We prove we're in the 80s with a double noggin knocker to both of the Funks and a punch sends Hoss to the outside. Terry has a rope from somewhere as everything breaks down. JYD throws Terry to the floor and

slams him on a table for good measure. Terry's knee is hurt and he can't stand up but he gets back inside anyway as Jimmy gets decked. Everything breaks down again and Tito puts Hoss in the Figure Four but Terry blasts Dog in the head with the megaphone for the pin.

**Rating:** B-. I've said before that the 1980s were the best era ever for tag wrestling and this show proves it again. Most of the show hasn't been all that great but the tag matches have been by far the best matches on the card. This was a fun and WILD match but not to the point where you couldn't keep track of what was going on. Good stuff here and after two boring matches in the LA section this was a good match to pick things up.

We set up the cage, which is the big blue kind for the first time ever.

Hogan is lifting weights with bad ribs and we recap Hogan vs. Bundy. On SNME, Hogan defended the title against Don Muraco and after the match, Bundy ran in and destroyed Hogan with a bunch of splashes to injure the ribs. The doctor says Hogan shouldn't be doing this, so Hulk does chinups with a 100lb weight around his neck.

Heenan and Bundy say they're going to take the title from Hogan.

Elvira sends it to New York for comments from Susan and Vince.

### WWF World Title: Hulk Hogan vs. King Kong Bundy

Escape only here, as it should be. Tommy Lasorda of the LA Dodgers is guest ring announcer. Ricky Schroder, a child actor, is guest timekeeper and Robert Conrad, an adult actor, is guest referee. Hogan starts firing off right hands to start and knocks Bundy into the cage before choking Bundy with his own singlet. The following clothesline in the corner has Bundy in even more trouble and a forearm to the head staggers him even more. All Hogan so far.

Both guys block shots into the cage but King goes to the ribs to stop Hogan cold. There's a slam to mess with the ribs even more and Bundy goes for the door. You know it's not ending that fast though so Bundy comes back to choke with the tape a bit. Another attempt to escape goes about as well and Hulk comes back with an elbow in the corner. Bundy gets

rammed into the cage to bust him open and Hogan rakes his back a bit. More cage ramming occurs and Hulk climbs to the top to choke away on the ropes.

Hogan goes for the slam but Bundy falls down onto him as you would expect him to. Bundy goes to the door but Hulk grabs him for some choking with the rib tape. The Avalanche splash hits in the corner and a regular one hits as well so Hogan can shake like a fish. Hogan dives to stop Bundy from getting out but takes another Avalanche...with no effect whatsoever. The champion busts out a powerslam of all things and easily climbs out to retain.

**Rating:** D. It's Hogan vs. a monster in 1986 so what in the world were you expecting to see here? At the end of the day this was the safe move but with all of the other heels on the roster, this is the best they could come up with? I mean, you have Savage, Piper or even Roberts to be in there, but you pick Bundy? It's not like this was some huge feud as the SNME that set this up was five weeks before this show. I've heard that Vince was trying desperately to get Nikita Koloff to jump and be in the main event but when they fell through, they picked a monster instead. Eh when all else fails, go with the safe pick.

Hogan beats up Heenan to close the show.

**Overall Rating:** D. This is a tough one to grade for the same reason that I don't consider it the worst Mania ever: it was the second one and they had NO idea what they were doing here. The main thing that helps this show is that while most of the matches are worthless, they're FAST. Of all the non-tag matches, only the cage match and the boxing match break ten minutes and the cage match does so by about 15 seconds. It's certainly not a good show and if this happened today Vince would be jumping off a building, but for its time this wasn't completely terrible.

### Ratings Comparison

Paul Orndorff vs. Don Muraco

Original: D+

Redo: D

Randy Savage vs. George Steele

Original: C-

Redo: C-

Jake Roberts vs. George Wells

Original: F

Redo: D+

Mr. T. vs. Roddy Piper

Original: F

Redo: D

Fabulous Moolah vs. Velvet McIntyre

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

Corporal Kirschner vs. Nikolai Volkoff

Original: D-

Redo: N/A

Battle Royal

Original: B

Redo: D

British Bulldog vs. Dream Team

Original: B-

Redo: B

Rick Steamboat vs. Hercules Hernandez

Original: C-

Redo: C-

Adrian Adonis vs. Uncle Elmer

Original: N/A

Redo: D-

Terry Funk/Hoss Funk vs. Tito Santana/Junkyard Dog

Original: B-

Redo: B-

Hulk Hogan vs. King Kong Bundy

Original: B-

Redo: D

Overall Rating

Original: D+

Redo: D

Dang those must have been the strong rose colored glasses back then.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/09/history-of-wrestlemania-with-kb-wrestlemania-2-what-the-hell-were-they-thinking/>

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

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# Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania I: The Beginning of the Beginning

I had to get here eventually and it feels great to be back. These shows are the first reviews I ever did as I thought it would be fun to look back at every show leading up to Wrestlemania 25. Little did I know that I would spend four years doing them and wind up going on to do every major PPV of all time. That's appropriate as this is the birth of the modern PPV (yes Starrcade came first and no, it wasn't the same kind of show. Well not at first at least) and the biggest event in wrestling.

Wrestlemania started off as little more than a house show with mainstream press. Fueled by the Rock N Wrestling Connection which saw wrestlers appearing in pop and rock music videos (thanks to the rise of MTV), the show was the follow up to a pair of shows called the Brawl to End it All and the War to Settle the Score.

The show, featuring Hulk Hogan and Mr. T. teaming up in the main event, was a smash hit and has since spawned an unthinkable 29 followup editions. Wrestlemania paved the way for the modern day pay per view and is by far the biggest show of the year for the WWE. We're going to examine these shows one at a time and one per day until we reach Wrestlemania 30 this year in New Orleans. Let's get to it.

## Wrestlemania I

Date: March 31, 1985

Location: Madison Square Garden, New York City, New York

Attendance: 19,121

Commentators: Gorilla Monsoon, Jesse Ventura

We begin here at a show that certainly won't be like the rest of these.

This show is far more about the spectacle than the major matches which is shown in the main event. Our big match tonight is Hulk Hogan and Mr. T. teaming up to face Paul Orndorff and Roddy Piper in a grudge match. Yeah the first show doesn't even have the world title on the line. Today, there are at least two world title matches per show. Anyway, this is where it all began so let's get to it.

The opening video is a bunch of shots of New York City with the WWF logo and some pictures of the wrestlers coming in later. The celebrities for tonight's show (headlined by Muhammad Ali) are also shown.

Here's Mean Gene to sing the Star Spangled Banner.

Tito Santana says he's ready for the undefeated Executioner and he's going to teach the newcomer a thing or two about the big leagues.

The Executioner says he's going after Santana's injured leg. So much for secrecy.

#### Tito Santana vs. Executioner

Executioner is Buddy Rose (of Blow Away fame) under a mask. Tito is WAY over here in MSG so he was a good choice to open things up. We start with a crisscross before Tito dropkicks Executioner out to the floor. Back in and Santana hooks a headlock to take Executioner to the mat as we're still waiting on that promised leg work. Tito charges into a boot in the corner and Executioner takes him down with a knee to the ribs. A spinning toe hold is easily escaped so Executioner goes after the other leg. So which one is injured in the first place?

Tito shrugs him off and the masked guy hides in the corner. Since it's a corner that Tito is looking straight at, the hiding doesn't go all that well and Tito slugs him down. Executioner comes back with a slam and goes up, only to be slammed right back down. A Santana splash hits knees though and we get to the knee work. That work consists of one cannonball down onto it before Tito kicks him to the floor. Back in and the forearm sets up the Figure Four to make Santana the first winner in the history of Wrestlemania.



**Rating:** C-. This wasn't too bad and the crowd reacted well to Santana, but Executioner was just a guy there to be evil. For an opening match this was a pretty good idea but for a match in general it was pretty lame stuff. Then again they have no idea what they're doing at this point so it's understandable.

S.D. Jones says he's ready for King Kong Bundy. I see why I've never heard him talk other than this show. He's going to get down for Bundy.

Bundy says Jones needs to be ready for the Avalanche and the five count.

### S. D. Jones vs. King Kong Bundy

Here's an infamous one. Jones is a guy from the old days who is here to make the fans feel good I guess. The match lasts 23 seconds with Bundy shoving Jones into the corner, splashing him three times and getting the pin. According to the WWF the time was 9 seconds, which doesn't even make bad sense for them.

Matt Borne, the future Doink the Clown, says he's ready to beat a worldwide star in Ricky Steamboat. Steamboat's problem is that he's too nice of a guy. That's likely true.

Steamboat says this is the biggest card ever and he's here to develop his meanness. You don't hear this often, but Steamboat failed miserably in that regard.

### Matt Borne vs. Ricky Steamboat

Borne is the Maniac so I have another name to use. Steamboat is looking chiseled here. I've never seen him so ripped up and it's a strange look on him. Also he isn't called the Dragon yet which is even odder to hear. Ricky speeds things up to start and chops Borne down before hitting a chinlock only about 40 seconds in.

Off to a headlock instead with Steamboat backflipping over Borne twice with the second time resulting in an atomic drop. Back to the headlock which is shifted into a front facelock but Borne comes back with a snap suplex for two. Ricky is like dude I'm Ricky Steamboat and suplexes Borne down, followed by a swinging neckbreaker. A shoulder block puts Borne

down and the cross body ends this near squash clean.

**Rating:** D+. Eh it's Steamboat in the 80s so how bad can this be? Ricky wasn't a huge star yet but he was rapidly becoming known as something special. It would be another year or so before he started tearing the house down on a regular basis and started having his masterpieces. Borne would be a lot better when he had a gimmick to go with his skills.

The Sammartinos are ready for Johnny V and Brutus Beefcake. Bruno threatens Johnny V is he tries to get involved.

#### David Sammartino vs. Brutus Beefcake

Sammartino was the son of a legend and had a good way into the business as a result. He had a good look on top of that, but he had one thing holding him back: he had no talent. His "career" was really just a way to keep Bruno around for a few more years to draw in some extra crowds and that's the only reason this match is happening. Beefcake is new at this point and is nowhere near what he would become so this is going to be pretty bad.

David's height doesn't help him either as he's about 5'8 or so. They head to the mat to start and Brutus has to bail to the floor for a breather. Back in and Sammartino takes it right back to the mat with a front facelock. A legdrop to the arm has Beefcake in trouble and it's time to talk to the managers a bit. Beefcake comes back with a headlock takeover but David grabs the legs to work them over a bit.

Off to a leg lock as we keep things very basic so far. Brutus fights up with his leg seeming fine all of a sudden. He drops some forearms to David's back and there's a hard whip into the corner by Beefcake. David comes back with a backdrop and they slug it out a bit. Sammartino strikes like his daddy. A suplex gets two for David but Brutus sends him to the floor. The managers get into a fight and both guys run in for a double DQ.

**Rating:** D+. This is a hard one to grade as it's a competitive match and not completely terrible, but the problem is how low level of quality this was. Neither guy was terrible but you could tell they were trying which

makes a big difference. This could have been WAY worse but it just wasn't that good in the first place.

I forgot to mention how the interviews are being done. Alfred Hayes is standing in the entrance with the ring behind him as the guys come by him for their matches. The interviews are recorded earlier in the day though so it's kind of odd.

Anyway Valentine says he's tough and leaner than usual.

JYD says he's going to take a bite out of Valentine. So he's promising to cheat? Good to know.

### Intercontinental Title: Junkyard Dog vs. Greg Valentine

Dog cranks on the arm to start and punches him in the shoulder ala Marciano. A punch to the face takes Valentine down and a headbutt sends the champion (Greg in case you're not familiar with this era) to the floor. Valentine tries his luck at the arm now and pounds away with some forearms to the back of the head. I'm not sure if that should hurt the Dog or not.

The champion goes after the leg now with what looks to be the start of a half crab but he never turns Dog over. A kind of DDT on the leg has the Dog in trouble again and there's a headbutt between the legs. Dog breaks up the Figure Four and hits a headbutt to stagger the champ some more. Jimmy Hart tries to interfere but Dog causes Valentine to blast him in the head instead. Valentine grabs a fast rollup and puts his feet on the ropes for the pin.

**Rating:** D+. I'm getting tired of using that rating but this is what the matches keep coming out as: not terrible but nothing good at all.

Valentine would get back to his current feud with Tito Santana very soon with the title changing hands pretty soon if I remember properly. Dog was there as more of a fun character than a serious threat so this was fine.

Speaking of Santana, here he is to tell the referee what happened. The referee restarts the match but Valentine walks out for the countout without ever getting back in. That's just building Santana vs. Valentine

for later.

Iron Sheik and Nikolai Volkoff say their countries are better than America. Where's my pitchfork when I need to run freaks like these off?

The US Express say they're ready.

Tag Titles: US Express vs. Nikolai Volkoff/Iron Sheik

The Express is Barry Windham and Mike Rotundo and they're defending tonight. A little trivia for you: the song Real American was originally used for the two of them but Hogan wound up using it instead. The heels do their whole Russian national anthem and Iran/Russia #1 deal before the match. Rotundo and Sheik start things off with the Iranian hooking a headlock. A dropkick puts Sheik down and Mike grabs a headlock.

Off to Barry who avoids double teaming and causes the challengers to collide. Back to Rotundo to work over Nikolai with an elbow drop getting two. Windham comes in off the top with a shot to the arm and Rotundo does the same thing. Sheik suplexes Mike down for two as the foreigners take over. Nikolai drops him throat first across the throat and the USA chant starts up.

A sunset flip gets a quick two for Mike but it's back to Sheik for an abdominal stretch. That doesn't last long though as Mike hiptosses out of it and it's off to Barry via the hot tag. The bulldog (Barry's finisher at the time) takes Volkoff out as everything breaks down. In the melee, Sheik hits Windham in the back with the cane for the pin and the titles.

**Rating:** C. This was a better match than we've seen so far with the fans getting way into the whole USA vs. foreigners thing. The title change was there only so something historic could happen and the Express got the belts back about two and a half months later. They would split soon after that with both guys heading to the NWA.

Sheik and Volkoff said they've proven their superiority now.

Intermission which is edited out of the home video releases.

Big John Studd says he'll slam Andre and keep the money.

## Big John Studd vs. Andre the Giant

This is a bodyslam challenge with some special stipulations: if Andre wins, he gets \$15,000 but if Studd wins, Andre has to retire. Studd charges in to start but is immediately chopped back and he bails to the floor. Back in and Andre punches him in the head and rams him in the corner with all of his weight. Studd goes for a slam and Andre is just like dude please. The fans chant for a slam as Andre puts on a bearhug. That goes on for a good while until Andre shifts over to a facelock. Apparently if this goes to the time limit, Andre has to retire. Andre kicks at the leg for a bit and casually slams Studd for the win. It's as quick as it sounds.

**Rating:** D. This was pretty terrible but the fans loved Andre and he had to be on here. Also this was part of a big feud as Andre and Studd cut Andre's hair a few weeks before this. The match was pretty weak but then again what are you going to expect from these two guys with Andre's body starting to fail on him.

Andre hands a few bucks out to the fans but Heenan steals the bag and runs off.

Andre says he doesn't care about the money because he's better than Studd and now he's proven it. He isn't retiring anytime soon either.

Cyndi Lauper and Wendi Richter want Wendi's title back. Richter is MAD here and has a nearly man's voice.

Moolah and Lelani Kai are ready to keep the title.

## Women's Title: Lelani Kai vs. Wendi Richter

The big deal here is that Cyndi Lauper, pop superstar of her day, is in Richter's corner. Moolah, as in the woman who cost Richter the title a few weeks ago, is in Kai's corner. The camera is on a wide shot for the start of Richter's music (Girls Just Wanna Have Fun) and the whole crowd literally gets up at once. Cool visual. For reasons that continue to elude me, the slow motion shot of Richter and Lauper running through the back and into the arena is a famous clip.

They both pull hair to start and we're clearly in a normal women's match here. By that I mean neither girl is that good in the ring and their moves are really overblown. Richter cranks on the arm for a bit until Kai pulls her hair to take over. Now the champion works on the arm for a bit and Richter is in trouble. More hair pulling ensues until Richter puts on a body scissors.

Kai charges into a boot in the corner and Richter shoves the referee away like a jerk. Moolah chokes away at Wendi in the corner until Lauper comes over to make the save. Richter hits a kind of reverse AA and a splash for two. Lelani hits a backbreaker for two before going up for a cross body, only to have Wendi roll through for the pin and the title.

**Rating:** D. These two just didn't work that well, but that would be the case for almost any women's match back in the 80s. The girls were out there basically for a spectacle or in this case the pop culture connection that was driving the era. Richter was a HUGE star at this point, occasionally main eventing house shows when Hogan was in another city.

Richter and Lauper dance around the ring in celebration in another semi-famous scene.

Richter and Lauper celebrate in the back as well.

We introduce the celebrities for the main event. The guest ring announcer is Billy Martin, former manager of the Yankees. He introduces Liberace as guest timekeeper, accompanied by four Rockettes. They all get in the ring and do the famous kicks which you'll see in the occasional highlight package. The guest referee is someone you may have heard of: Muhammad Ali. Jose Torres, another boxer, is on the floor as well.

Hulk Hogan/Mr. T. vs. Roddy Piper/Paul Orndorff

Piper comes out with the full New York Pipe and Drums band while Hogan and T come out to Eye of the Tiger. Advantage Hogan/T. Piper and Orndorff have Bob Orton as their second while Hogan/T have Jimmy Snuka. Advantage Hogan/T. This is looking kind of one sided isn't it? Oh and Pat Patterson is the inside referee while Ali is the outside referee. The heels all hug

and we're ready to go.

Orndorff and Hogan get things going but Piper tags in before there's any contact. Therefore T wants to fight Piper and they immediately head to the mat. T and Piper do some amateur stuff and T actually lasts long enough for a standoff. We get some staring until T hooks Piper in an airplane spin. Everything breaks down and Ali gets in to help break it up. Orton and Snuka try to get in as well but Ali glares Orton down.

Things break down again and the heels get rammed together until we get down to Hogan vs. Piper. Hulk rams Piper's head into the mat over and over until it's back to T. Hogan offers his knee as something to ram Piper's head into and it's back to the champion to send Piper to the outside. Orndorff jumps Hogan from behind and knocks him outside where Roddy blasts him with a chair.

Paul chokes away from the apron until T charges in for the save. Pat Patterson has to pull T off and you know he enjoys this in some way. A double atomic drop puts Hogan down and Orndorff hits a vertical suplex. Roddy comes back in to get in his punches and knee shots followed by an Orndorff top rope elbow to the back of Hulk's neck for two. Paul goes up again but misses the knee drop and there's the hot tag to T.

Orndorff and T brawl on the mat for a bit until Mr. gets in trouble via a Piper front facelock. That goes nowhere though as T stands up and makes the tag with no effort to be seen. Hogan pounds away but walks into a belly to back suplex. Orton and Snuka get in the ring for no apparent reason and as the referee calms things down, Orton comes in off the top with the cast but hits Orndorff by mistake to give Hogan the pin.

**Rating:** B-. Is it great? Not even close, but the point of this match was the crowd reacting to it rather than the match itself. It's easily the best match of the night and while the only question coming into tonight was who was getting the fall. This was exactly what the fans wanted and that's what this was supposed to be about. Nice main event here.

Piper and Orton bail but the good guys let Orndorff leave without beating on him even more.

We recap the ending of the main event.

Hogan, T and Snuka talk about winning.

Credits end the show. That's a sign of the past.

**Overall Rating:** D+. First and foremost let me make something clear: the overall rating for this show means jack because the whole thing was there for the spectacle and the matches were an afterthought other than the main event. This show was a huge success and kickstarted what is known as the Golden Era, so I don't think you can call it anything but a good show. It's also on the list of shows that every fan has to see at least once, just so they can say they've seen it. Not great quality, but incredible historical significance.

#### Ratings Comparison

Tito Santana vs. Executioner

Original: C

Redo: C-

King Kong Bundy vs. S.D. Jones

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

Ricky Steamboat vs. Matt Borne

Original: C-

Redo: D+

David Sammartino vs. Brutus Beefcake

Original: D-

Redo: D+

Junkyard Dog vs. Greg Valentine



Original: D+

Redo: D+

Nikolai Volkoff/Iron Shiek vs. U.S. Express

Original: B-

Redo: C

Andre the Giant vs. Big John Studd

Original: D+

Redo: D

Wendi Richter vs. Lelani Kai

Original: B

Redo: D

Hulk Hogan/Mr. T. vs. Roddy Piper/Paul Orndorff

Original: B

Redo: B-

Overall Rating

Original: C-

Redo: D+

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/08/history-of-wrestlemania-with-kb-wrestlemania-1-just-a-big-house-show/>

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