

Clash of the Champions #9: New York Knockout – Not Exactly Velvet Sky

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Date: November 15, 1989

Location: RPI Field House, Troy, New York

Attendance: 4,000

Commentators: Jim Ross, Gordon Solie

Here we have a two match show: Flair vs. Funk II in an I Quit match and Pillman vs. Luger for the US Title. Luger was awesome in 89 and Funk was his crazy old self (yes he was old back then too). That being said, for a free TV show is there anything else you really need? In short, no. These old Clashes are usually very hit or miss but as almost always it was based on the card. This looks good so let's get to it.

The opening video is about Flair vs. Funk which is about pride and not the title.

Freebirds vs. Road Warriors

The Birds were world tag team champions here but had already lost the titles at a TV taping before this aired. This is non-title anyway so it doesn't matter. Hayes vs. Hawk gets us going and Hayes gets too cocky which catches up with him. Yeah I'm stunned too. Off to Garvin and he gets his head taken off by a dropkick. Off to Animal and similar things happen. We're more or less in a squash so far. Animal misses a charge and the champs double team him a bit. After about 90 seconds of that, Hawk comes in and tosses the referee and it's a DQ. The fans boo that out of the building.

Rating: D. Wow this was pointless. Somehow everything I said in there too over five minutes. I have no idea what they were

going for here, especially with the title change airing later in the week. Doesn't this make the champs look weak going into their title defense? Either way, the Steiners would get the belts and hold them for a very long time so no one remembers this anyway.

Funk lists off various things that he and Flair disagree on. Gary Hart, Funk's manager, says do it for Texas.

Time for a vote of who the most popular wrestler in the NWA is. Gee I wonder who it's going to be. To the shock of no one with anything resembling knowledge about this era, it's Sting. There's another award for Wrestler of the Decade. This is actually voted on by the PWI Editors and all that jazz and allegedly Hogan lost a fair vote to Flair. I've heard multiple rumors that this was rigged and I wouldn't be surprised if that was true.

Woman, the manager of Doom, shows off her cleavage and says Doom is awesome. She promises a surprise for Rick Steiner later tonight.

Doom vs. Eddie Gilbert/Tommy Rich

Doom is Ron Simmons/Butch Reed in masks. They would take the titles from the Steiners in the summer of 1990. Gilbert tries an O'Connor Roll and can't even get one. The Tennessee guys work on Ron's arm and it's off to Reed now. I think Rich/Gilbert are faces here. After a brief control segment by them, Doom realizes they're a real team and not a pair of thrown together guys and starts taking over. This is one of those matches that needs to be a lot shorter. What is supposed to be a hot tag to Rich and everything breaks down, allowing a middle rope modified Hart Attack to pin Rich.

Rating: D. This was another bad match. Doom would get a lot better but they needed better opponents at this point. Rich would join the York Foundation in like a year which would be his last grasp at anything of note. This was nothing though

and Doom would get a lot better rather soon.

Time for Jim Cornette's talk show segment with his guests the Steiners. This is important for one thing: Scotty has been using a move and Cornette wants a name for it. Rick talks about watching a movie the other day and he came up with a name for it, and for the first time ever we hear the name Frankensteiner. They talk about their match later and Doom for a bit but this was all about naming the move. They make fun of Woman a bit also.

Midnight Express vs. Dynamic Dudes

The Dudes are Shane Douglas and Johnny Ace Laurinits (Yes the one from Raw) as skateborders that are straight out of the 80s. Both teams have Cornette as their manager so he's in a neutral corner. Basically he was starting to manage the Dudes but was still under contract with the Express and they signed the match without him, putting Cornette right in the middle.

It's the Lane/Eaton version and they try to convince Corny to come to their corner but he turns them down again. Douglas vs. Eaton to get us going. Is there a tag team fetish tonight? They fight over the arm to start and it's off to Lane quickly. Shane works on his arm as well and we're in a technical match to start us off. In something you'll almost never see, Cornette calls out Stan Lane on his hair pulling. This is surreal to watch.

Ace comes in and the idea of seeing the current version of him in trunks is very wrong. In a NICE touch and a fine example of the difference between today's announcing and the old version of it, Solie is going over the upcoming house show schedule but says they'll get to that in a minute because he doesn't want to miss this action. We go to a headlock and they go over the rest of the schedule. See now, WAS THAT SO HARD??? It took about 30 more seconds and the wrestling gets played up stronger as well as the announcements getting more focus.

Everything wins.

Shane avoids a superplex from Bobby and gets a rollup for two. Off to Ace and he's just not that good. Lane takes him down and the Express takes over to a big pop. The Rocket Launcher gets knees and everything breaks down. With Shane getting a chain from somewhere, Jim comes in to grab it after it fell on the floor. He turns on the Dudes though, getting the crowd way into it and Eaton steals the pin as the Express is back together.

Rating: C. Not a bad little tag match here and the idea is that it burned off two angles: the Dudes being the new team of Cornette and the Express getting back together for their one final run. Nothing great here and the dudes weren't all that good but this was ok and the fans were way into it so that's all that matters.

Super Destroyer vs. Steve Williams

Destroyer is Jack Victory in a mask. Destroyer jumps Williams early and here's Norman the Lunatic (Bastian Booger) as Santa Claus. Williams takes over quickly and gorilla presses him with multiple reps and then a clothesline to the floor. Back in the Oklahoma Stampede (powerslam) ends this. Total squash.

Norman gives Doc (Williams) a teddy bear afterwards and Norman gets a hug. Cute.

Steiner Brothers vs. Skyscrapers

It's Sid and Dan Spivey. Rick vs. Spivey to get us going and Rick is like HAVE A GERMAN BOY. Back in Spivey hits a tombstone (keep that in mind) for two as Scott saves. Everything breaks down and Scott comes in with a Frankensteiner to Spivey and a fallaway slam to Sid. The fallaway slam was botched and Sid would be out for months with an injured lung. His replacement on the team was a guy from Memphis. He hung around for a year and then would leave for

the WWF where he would wear a trenchcoat and come out to funeral music.

The tall dudes aren't sure who is legal at the moment so it's Sid vs. Scott now. Off to Spivey who beats Scott down for a bit until the Steiner Brothers remember that they're the Steiner Brothers and beat down the tall dudes like they're nothing. Hot tag brings in Rick, although I'd question how hot a tag can be in a five minute match. Doom runs in and it's a DQ. During this, two things happen. First of all, Simmons runs in and immediately Scott snaps off a picture perfect Frankensteiner to send him outside. I'll get to the second thing in a minute.

Rating: C-. This could only be so good as the Steiners were untouchable around this time and would take the tag titles that rightfully belonged to them in about three days. The tag division was awesome at this point and would keep getting better, namely because the Steiners were totally awesome.

The Road Warriors run out to even the odds and the fans ERUPT. A big brawl takes us to a commercial.

Post break the two good teams talk about the Iron Man Tournament, which was a round robin tournament held at Starrcade between three of these four teams. The Skyscrapers were out so the Samoan Swat Team took their place. The tournament wound up sucking and the Road Warriors won. It did however contain one of the two (the other being in 96 on Nitro) meetings between the Road Warriors and the Steiners which could have main evented a PPV. They all cut promos but for some reason the New York Knockout logo is on the screen instead of them.

Oh yeah the other thing that happened: Woman's bodyguard Nitron debuted and did very little. He later played Sabretooth in the X-Men trilogy.

US Title: Lex Luger vs. Brian Pillman

Lex is a heel here but he's having such awesome matches and is so scary as an athlete that he's getting over as a face despite being heel recently. We talk about the singles Iron Man tournament which has Sting, Luger, Flair and Muta. Things start off very fast and Pillman fires off some dropkicks and Lex heads out to cool his head. This is a rematch from Halloween Havoc where Luger had to cheat to keep the belt. Back in and Luger can't get anything going as Pillman has everything planned out.

A missile dropkick gets two for Brian. Out to the floor and Lex goes into the post as this has been all Pillman. More chops put Luger down and back inside we go. The champ FINALLY gets something going with a belly to back and momentum shifts. Lex is in his zone now and he sends Pillman out to the floor. He starts working on the back with a slam on the floor and a suplex back in for two. See how easy psychology can be?

Powerslam puts Pillman down but after Lex poses too much Pillman grabs a rollup for two. Things speed up a bit and Brian hits a clothesline to put Lex down. Top rope cross body, Pillman's finisher, takes Lex down but the referee went down as well. Pillman hammers away even more but Lex cracks him in the head with a chair and since all referees are deaf and blind, it's enough for the pin for Lex to retain and draw a bunch of boeing.

Rating: B. Good match here as both guys worked hard out there. Pillman looked great at first and it's a nice ending as Lex has to cheat to win. That's the right idea at times and I think it works pretty well here. Lex would lose the tournament in the last match to Sting but would keep the US Title for about 11 more months.

Luger beats him down post match until Sting comes out for the save. Luger wants a showdown and Sting is all like BRING IT ON but Lex is scared of Sting in dress pants (and to be fair it's a weird look on him) so he bails. Sting chases after him and

gets in a single punch but Lex runs more. They wouldn't have their big showdown for about 15 months with Sting winning the title at SuperBrawl II.

Flair talks about how he's going to still be champion after tonight and this company is great. Tonight it's an I Quit match and for two legends like them, that's humiliating and the end. The loser has to retire and to Funk's credit, when he loses here he did in fact retire for the rest of the year and didn't wrestle in WCW until 1994. He wrestled in ECW a lot and in Japan some, but I guess that's a good result for a Funk retirement.

Terry Funk vs. Ric Flair

I Quit match remember. This is non-title but Flair has said he'll forfeit the title if he loses. Funk has Gary Hart with him and offers him a chance to walk out before the bell. Funk is sent to the floor and is all mad. I mean more than usual that is. Flair whips him around a bit and we head out to the floor with Ric hammering away. Into the ring again and they hit the mat for a bit.

They almost go onto the announce table and are fighting on the apron now. Flair chops him but falls down as Funk is still standing. We head back to the floor and it's all Funk. He pounds away back in the ring in the corner and says to Flair to say it but Flair grabs an atomic drop to take over again. Funk slaps Flair so Flair chokes him. They're back on the floor again and Flair pounds him into the crowd.

Back inside now and Flair demands that Funk say I Quit. Funk gets in a shot and a swinging neckbreaker as he yells about the attack (Funk piledrove him onto a table to start the feud) and his bad neck. Piledriver still doesn't get a yes. Another one on the floor hits and Flair is practically dead. This is a nice touch as Funk is the crazy brawler and Flair is in WAY over his head. Funk sets up a table (back when that's a HUGE

deal) but Flair fights back with hard chops.

Ric is all fired up and Funk staggers around like there's something wrong with his inner mind. He gets crotched on the railing and the little Funkers aren't happy. Funk's selling is really quite good. Now it's time for the knee and the fans cheer. Flair was indeed popular back in the day. This is fired up Flair, almost like you would see in the Vader match about four years later.

Funk tries to leave up the aisle and Flair tackles him from behind and is all like "you wanted this and now you're getting it." In something you won't see that often, Flair suplexes Funk over the top and onto the apron. There's the Figure Four and after fighting as long as he can, Funk actually says he quits and it's over.

Rating: A-. Not much to complain about here as the transformation from wrestler to fighter/crazy man by Flair was a great sight to see. Once he got going, Funk was trying to survive instead of win which was a very cool thing to see. This match worked and is well worth seeing, if nothing else for the storytelling in it. And to see Funk quit, which you'll likely never see again.

Flair demands a handshake and gets one but Gary Hart, Funk's manager, jumps him and Muta/Dragonmaster run in for a double beatdown. Here's Sting (who never put his shirt back on I guess) for the save. Sting puts Hart in the Scorpion and Flair puts Muta in the Figure Four. Luger comes out and hits everyone with a chair to set up the big beatdown. Well every face that is. Luger breaks the trophies (which were in the middle of nowhere next to each other) to end the show.

Overall Rating: A-. Keep in mind that this was a free TV show. You had to very good matches and the rest of the show certainly isn't bad. It's just kind of there. For a free show though and a TV special, this is something that I'm totally

fine with. It set up Starrcade (where there were literally no non-tournament matches) well even though the show sucked and it blew of Funk vs. Flair and turned Funk face. Good stuff and one of the best Clashes.