

# Dark: Elevation – January 30, 2023 (100th Episode): It's Not Bad

## Dark: Elevation

Date: January 30, 2023

Location: Rupp Arena, Lexington, Kentucky

Commentators: Ian Riccaboni, Matt Menard, Paul Wight

It's the 100th edition of the show and I happened to be in the house for it so let's take a look at this show. Thankfully this is now just the series of dark matches before Dynamite and not the insane marathon sessions this/Dark had back in the day. If nothing else we should get a nice main event so let's get to it.

I was sitting in the middle deck for this show with the big screen on my right. Traffic did cause me to miss the first ten or so minutes though.

## Red Velvet vs. Billie Starkz

Velvet takes her down without much effort but Starkz is back with a German suplex. It wasn't quite as good as the commentators made it seem, as Velvet Iconoclasm's her off the top for two. A kick to the face out of the corner rocks Velvet again but Velvet hits a running knee to the back. Starkz tiger suplexes her for two and a Swanton is good for the same. Velvet is right back with a poisonrana into the Final Slice for the pin at 3:18.

**Rating:** C. Starkz impressed while she had the chance and that German suplex was pretty good. I can see why she has the hype that she has been receiving at this point in her career, though she needs something to set her apart. Velvet seems likely to be fed to Jade Cargill soon, because that is a feud

the world has been waiting to see wrapped up.

Athena takes over her own interview as she looks for a tag partner for tonight. Diamante (with Athena being reminded of her name) will do, with Athena offering a future title shot in exchange for a win. That's enough for Diamante.

#### Workhorsesmen vs. Dark Order

John Silver and Alex Reynolds, with Evil Uno, for the Order here. Silver and Henry start things off with Silver running him over without much trouble. Drake comes in with a slingshot hilo on Silver and a falling headbutt gets two. Silver manages to roll away from Henry though and it's off to Reynolds to clean house. A tiger driver gets two on Henry but he's back up with a flipping faceplant. Drake kicks Reynolds in the face but accidentally gets dropkicked by Henry. That's enough for a series of strikes to Henry, setting up the cutter into the German suplex into the flipping rollup to give Reynolds the pin at 4:23.

**Rating:** C. The Dark Order have settled into a nice role: the team who is there to do nothing more than fire up the crowd in a pretty nothing match. That is a valuable piece to have and what is left of the team plays it well. Just don't try to make them too serious and everything should work out well for them.

#### Rush vs. Brian Pillman Jr.

I had forgotten Pillman Jr. was still here. Rush chops away to start and rakes the eyes over the top for a bonus. A hard right hand sends Pillman outside, with commentary getting to talk about the new barricades. Preston Vance gets in a few cheap shots and Rush is able to kick away at Pillman's head back inside. Pillman actually wins a strike off and hits a dropkick, only to get knocked into the corner. The Bull's Horns finishes Pillman at 4:06.

**Rating:** C. This show is already getting into a funk of having

matches on a similar level over and over. This one at least had some more star power to it, as Rush certainly feels like a big deal, even if he hasn't really done much around here. Pillman Jr....dang I just don't know what happened. He felt like he had the potential and it just never took off. It still could, but he might need to go somewhere else and build himself up first.

Post match Rush whips him with an electrical cord and bends Pillman's arm.

### Diamante/Athena vs. Yuka Sakazaki/Skye Blue

Madison Rayne is here with Blue/Sakazaki. Diamante runs Sakazaki over to start but Sakazaki pops up with a sliding lariat for two. The camera goes a bit nuts for a second as Blue comes in and headscissors Athena into the corner. A Diamante distraction lets Athena knock Blue off the top though and Athena pats Diamante on the head.

The villains take turns suplexing Blue until she kicks Athena away for the hot tag. Sakazaki gets to clean house, including a missile dropkick to Athena. Everything breaks down and Athena powerbombs Sakazaki. Back up and Sakazaki hits Diamante in the face, setting up a spinning armtrap faceplant for the pin at 7:08.

**Rating:** C+. They had some more time with this one and it helped let them flesh things out a bit. Sakazaki is a ball of energy and Blue has come a long way in her time around here. At the same time, Athena is growing into her heel role rather well and I'm curious to see how far she can take it after her previous pushes have stalled so often.

### Top Flight vs. Ari Daivari/Tony Nese

Mark Sterling is here with Daivari and Nese and offers free soap to everyone here. There is allegedly a bar of soap under their seat, but everyone who checks is declared guilty of

breaking Kentucky's showering laws. Darius dropkicks Nese down to start as we hear about Sterling's toy podcast. Dante comes in with a slingshot hilo but Nese gets in a cheap shot from behind.

The springboard moonsault gives Nese two on Darius and the villains double team him down in the corner. A double hurricanrana is enough to get Darius over for the tag though and everything breaks down. Dante and Darius both hit big flip dives but the Nose Dive is countered back inside. Instead it's a Dominator/sliding cutter for two on Dante but he is right back up with the Nose Dive for the pin at 5:03.

**Rating:** C+. This was another fun one as Top Flight continues to rack up wins. I could see the team getting somewhere in AEW and a title reign is not out of the question. The fact that they went from little more than an ok team to one of the most entertaining acts around. Go with that and have them do their thing here and there.

Yuka Sakazaki is asked about Athena but the Dark Order comes in to offer her a spot on the team. She says "hai" (yes in Japanese) but they don't quite get it and leave.

#### Kings Of The Black Throne vs. Turbo Floyd/Truth Magnum

Floyd and Magnum have rather toothpaste colored gear. Black spins Magnum around to start and has a seat to wait on him, much to Magnum's shock. Turbo and King come in, with King chopping away at Floyd and Magnum. Everything breaks down and the toss over the shoulder piledriver finishes for King at 2:52. The House Of Black is getting a bigger and bigger reaction every week. They're going to be turned face sooner than later at this rate.

#### Ring Of Honor World Title: Claudio Castagnoli vs. Blake Christian.

Castagnoli is defending and runs Christian over to start. A

shot to the face drops Christian again but he manages to knock Castagnoli outside. That's fine with the champ, who drops Christian chest first onto the apron. Back in and Castagnoli is not looking worried but an attempt at a Samoan drop changes things.

Christian gets a boot up in the corner though and Castagnoli gets kicked down. With Castagnoli on the apron, Christian cuts him down with a spear and adds a top rope double stomp for two back inside. Back in and Castagnoli tries the Swing but gets rolled up for two. Christian hits a springboard 450 for two but gets pulled into a powerbomb. The Swing makes Christian tap at 7:17.

**Rating:** B-. It wasn't a classic but Castagnoli let Christian get in some nice stuff near the end. Castagnoli is one of the better things that AEW has been doing as of late, especially with the Ring Of Honor World Title not being the focus so often. Christian is someone who has looked good during his appearances so we should be in for something good when he gets to stick around.

**Overall Rating:** C+. This is another one of those shows that is almost entirely wrestling rather than advancing any stories. That makes a lot of sense as ultimately, it is the second internet show that AEW produces every week and it doesn't mean much. For about an hour of action a week though, it is about as harmless as it could go, which is at least one way to go. This show was far from great and it's still too long, but getting the stars out there to do something is better than having them sit at home. Pretty good show here.

### Results

Red Velvet b. Billie Starkz – Final Slice

Dark Order b. Workhorsesmen – Rollup to Henry

Rush b. Brian Pillman Jr. – Bull's Horns

Yuka Sakazaki/Skye Blue b. Diamante/Athena – Spinning armtrap faceplant to Diamante

Top Flight b. Ari Daivari/Tony Nese – Nose Dive to Nese  
Kings Of The Black Throne b. Turbo Floyd/Truth Magnum – Toss  
over the shoulder piledriver to Floyd  
Claudio Castagnoli b. Blake Christian – Swing

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