

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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Dark: Elevation – October 24, 2022: I Don't Get It

Dark: Elevation

Date: October 24, 2022

Location: Heritage Bank Center, Cincinnati, Ohio

Commentators: Ian Riccaboni, Jose the Assistant, Matt Menard

This is the show that was taped before last week's Dynamite and since I was in attendance, it might be worth a look. I mean, as much of a look as a series of squash matches is going to be that is. I'm still not clear on why we need this and regular Dark but AEW works in odd ways. Let's get to it.

We open with a quick Full Gear/Rampage ad.

10 vs. Baron Black

Black goes right after him to start but 10 is back with a spinebuster. The discus lariat finishes Black at 44 seconds. Well that was to the point.

Russ Myers/T-Money vs. Ortiz/Eddie Kingston

Kingston seems to be rather popular, even as Myers and T-Money jump them at the bell. Ortiz gets caught in the double team with T-Money jumping over Myers' back to land on Ortiz for a crash. That doesn't last long and it's off to Kingston to clean house for the rapid fire chops. It's right back to Ortiz for a fisherman's suplex and the pin at 1:56.

Post match Kingston snaps a bit and beats on the losers but has to be kept from using a chair.

Serena Deeb vs. Haley J

Deeb allows her to grab a headlock to start but reverses into one of her own. The fisherman's neckbreaker into the Serenity Lock makes J tap at 2:01. Deeb continues to be awesome.

Workhorsemen vs. Blonds

If "the Blonds" is as good as you can get, just split the team. Drake knocks Pillman off the apron to start and heads outside, where Garrison takes him down with a dive. Back in and Garrison gets chopped in the corner, setting up a clothesline to give Drake two. Garrison manages a powerslam to get out of trouble and the hot tag brings in the hometown Pillman. Everything breaks down and Henry hits a top rope double stomp but Drake misses a moonsault. The dropkick/spinebuster combination finishes Drake at 5:49.

Rating: C. Perfectly nice tag match here and they were smart enough to let Pillman have the pin in his hometown. It was

cool to see a somewhat competitive match on this show, even if it was only about five minutes long. What matters is giving the crowd something to cheer about though and a hometown star can go a long way in doing that.

Emi Sakura/Mei Suruga vs. Nikki Victory/Jaylee

Suruga gets in a cheap shot on Jaylee to start and it's off so Suruga legally for a springboard dropkick to the ribs. Victory comes in for a dropkick but her suplex attempt is shrugged off. A butterfly backbreaker gets two on Victory and an assisted splash into a moonsault finishes Jaylee at 3:30.

Rating: C. This was more or less dominance from some rather talented stars with over the top gimmicks. They beat up the other two without much trouble and it was fine enough while it lasted, with the moonsault looking rather nice. I'm not sure why Sakura isn't appearing on the main shows, but she would be more than good enough to hang there.

Matt Hardy vs. Lord Crewe

Before the match, the Firm says no Twist of Fate from Matt this week. The distracted Hardy gets choked in the corner but he fights out without much trouble. The Twist of Fate finishes Crewe at 1:44.

Post match the Firm fines Matt \$50,000 for using the Twist of Fate so he grabs Stokely Hathaway. That's another \$50,000! And he's suspended next week!

Claudio Castagnoli vs. QT Marshall

Marshall backs into the corner to start and then bails to the floor. Back in and they lock up about a minute in with Castagnoli flipping him over by the wrist. Marshall's headlock doesn't work as he gets muscled over into a backbreaker but manages to send Castagnoli into the corner.

Marshall hits a dropkick but gets suplexed over with straight

muscle. The rapid fire uppercuts rock Marshall and he needs a breather. That's fine with Castagnoli who throws him back inside but gets caught with a handspring enziguri. Back up and Castagnoli spins him around for two but Marshall's tornado DDT gets two more. Castagnoli blocks the Diamond Cutter, elbows Marshall down, and finishes with the Riccola Bomb at 9:45.

Rating: C+. Marshall continues to be good at what he does most of the time, though Castagnoli running him over in the end was the right way to go. Castagnoli is someone who can be pushed towards the main event rather quickly and being in the main event of Elevation is at least something. Now just get him back on Dynamite already.

Overall Rating: C+. The interesting thing about this show is how fast it moves, as very little has a chance to sink in. I'm not sure why they need to run seven matches when three of them get any kind of time, but it is a good way to warm the crowd up before the real show. Granted it is also a way to burn them out before the show, but at least Castagnoli gave them a feel good ending.

Results

10 b. Baron Black – Discus lariat

Ortiz/Eddie Kingston b. Russ Myers/T-Money – Fisherman's suplex to Myers

Serena Deeb b. Haley J – Serenity Lock

Blonds b. Workhorsesmen – Spinebuster/dropkick combination to Henry

Emi Sakura/Mei Suruga b. Nikki Victory/Jaylee – Moonsault to Jaylee

Matt Hardy b. Lord Crewe – Twist of Fate

Claudio Castagnoli b. QT Marshall – Riccola Bomb

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Dark Elevation – September 13, 2021: Rapid Fire Firing Rapidly

Dark: Elevation

Date: September 13, 2021

Location: Fifth Third Arena, Cincinnati, Ohio

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Paul Wight, Eddie Kingston

This is the other Dark show and since I was in the arena for the show, I might as well take a one off look. I've never actually seen Dark: Elevation, but the fact that it is only about forty minutes long as opposed to the occasional two plus hours of Dark is a good sign. Now just give us a good show to go with it. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Emi Sakura vs. Queen Aminata

Both of them are in royal outfits because AEW needs to put the two of them into one match. Sakura brings Aminata down to the

mat without much effort and there's a hair takedown to make it worse. The surfboard keeps Aminata in trouble but she's back with a headscissors to pull Sakura face first into the back of the tights. The running hip attack connects in the corner but Sakura is back with a Downward Spiral. A butterfly backbreaker sets up a twisting Vader Bomb for the pin on Aminata at 3:48.

Rating: C-. That's probably going to be one of the longer matches on this show, which is kind of a nice thing to have. Aminata seems to have some skills to go with the Queen deal but I'm not sure how far she is going to go when she isn't even the most successful royalty in the match. Sakura is still fine, though she has never done much for me so far.

Frankie Kazarian vs. Ren Jones

Kazarian works on the arm and then grabs a headlock, which he flips back into the top wristlock. Jones gets up an elbow in the corner and loads up a powerbomb, only to drop Kazarian down into a right hand. Not that it matters as Kazarian hits some running knees to the back in the corner, setting up a chickenwing for the tap at 2:59.

Penelope Ford vs. Layna Lennox

Bunny is here with Ford, who forearm away to start. A Samoan drop is countered into a Russian legsweep to give Lennox two but Ford sends her outside for a beating from Bunny. Some slingshot knees to the back set up the Muta Lock to make Lennox tap at 2:24. Effective squash.

Butcher and the Blade vs. Turbo Floyd/Truth Magnum

This is Butcher and Blade's (with Bunny) first time teaming together in months. Butcher pounds Magnum down to start and sends him into the corner. Blade comes in for a hard lariat and the powerbomb/neckbreaker combination is good for the pin at 1:17. So Butcher and Blade are back in the already very heavy tag division. Butcher looks like he's near tears about

being back.

Jade Cargill vs. Shawna Reed

Big boot, shoulder, fall away slam, Jaded for the pin on Reed at 1:02.

Tay Conti/Anna Jay vs. Ella Shae/Jaylee

Conti flips Shae around to start and a facebuster makes it worse. Jay comes in to kick Jaylee down and hits a running seated Blockbuster. Jaylee manages to take Conti down for all of two seconds before she gets kicked in the face. Everything breaks down and it's a double Downward Spiral into a TayKO into the Queenslayer to finish Jaylee at 2:53. This is another team that is back.

Daniel Garcia vs. Lee Moriarty

Garcia has 2.0 with him and Moriarty is one of the best indy guys around today. They go straight to the mat for the technical off into a standoff. Back up and Moriarty ducks a clothesline and rolls over into a backslide for two. Garcia drops him hard with a chop and it's time to start on Moriarty's arm. We'll switch that up to a shot to the leg, including a Bret Hart style snap back.

Another chop gives Garcia another two but Moriarty is back up with a cradle for the same. The Pepsi Twist gets two more but Garcia pulls him down into the Crossface. That's broken up so Garcia tries a failed Sharpshooter attempt. Moriarty is back with a double stomp to the chest but hurts his knee in the process. Garcia grabs the leg and puts on the Sharpshooter, which he cranks back for the tap at 6:10.

Rating: B-. I remember saying earlier in the year that Moriarty was going to get a chance on the big stage sooner rather than later and it is nice to see him doing just that. He is incredibly smooth in the ring and can do just about

anything, which makes him a heck of a lot of fun to watch. Good stuff here, and absolutely the match of the night by a few laps.

Skye Blue vs. Nyla Rose

Vickie Guerrero handles Rose's entrance. Blue ducks a forearm in the corner and Rose gives her a bit of a look. A kick to the head staggers Rose but she is back with a side slam. Rose hits a lifting powerbomb but Blue is back with a running hurricanrana. Blue gets in a high crossbody for two but her hurricanrana is countered into the Beast Bomb for the pin at 3:30.

Rating: C. Not too bad here with Blue getting in the plucky underdog offense until Rose caught her in the end. That's how a match like this should go and Blue continues to look good in her defeats. Rose is always going to be a monster and it makes sense to have something like this to wrap up the show.

Overall Rating: C. This is my first time watching Elevation and while it was cool for a little variety, I really don't see the need for it to be an eight match show. With so many of the matches being ones that don't even break three minutes, nothing has the chance to stand out. Outside of Garcia vs. Moriarty, there isn't much to be said here, though that was a heck of a match. When I was watching live, I kept waiting on the show to wrap up because I was getting tired of seeing people coming out for matches. It's fun, but cut this down or make the matches longer, because this format gets tiring in a hurry.

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